

# Career Planning

So, you've decided it's time to start thinking about what you want to do with the rest of your life.  
..

In many ways, making career plans is similar to planning a vacation. Your first step will be to choose a destination. Where do you want to go on your trip? Skiing in the Rockies? Disneyland? A tour of Europe? A safari in Africa? Even if you know that a ski trip would be your perfect vacation, how do you decide on the best ski resort? Unless you do some "homework," your vacation may end up being less than you had hoped for.

Unlike a vacation, however, if you don't do your homework when planning your career, the result may be a little more devastating than just a couple of wasted weeks and a slightly lighter wallet. You might end up spending thousands of dollars and four years in university, only to find you don't like the career you chose on a whim. That's an expensive whim!

## METHOD 1

### Introduction -- Career Planning

**VERY IMPORTANT** -- To get the best results, read each page carefully! **Please note:** This career planning tool only retains information for thirty days after which it is automatically deleted from the server. It is your responsibility to ensure that you print out any results that you wish to keep for your personal records.

Everybody wants to be a success. Often people believe that if they don't make the "right choices" they won't get the life they want to lead.

### Talk about pressure!

Choosing the right path isn't that difficult. All it involves is little careful research. Think of it like buying a car instead of making a "life decision." If you were buying a car you might:

#### 1) Think about what you want/need from a car.

- Which models seem interesting?
- What colors do I like?
- Do I need certain size of vehicle?
- and so on...

## 2) "Shop around" to see what choices you have.

- Go to dealerships to look at different options.
- Ask salespeople about your choices.
- Ask friends/family their ideas.
- Talk to people who have owned the vehicles you are interested in...

## 3) Select the vehicle that seems to meet most of your needs.

Choosing a career isn't much different...

When planning a career you might want to consider these questions:

### Step 1) What do I need/want from a career?

- What are my interests?
- What are my skills?
- What kind of things are important to me?
- What traits do I have?

**Step 2) When you are finished Step 1, we'll provide you with some SUGGESTIONS for you to research. But you will also want to:**

- Get information from a variety of sources.
- Ask a career counsellor about your choices.
- Ask friends/family their ideas.
- Talk to people who are in the occupations you are interested in.

## 3) Select the career that seems to meet most of your needs... for now.

- Most people have to change careers at least once in their lives. Don't be afraid to have some options for 'Now' and 'Later' in your career...

When planning a career you might want to consider these questions:

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#### **Progress**

You can check back here for progress. As you complete sections, new sections open up.

#### **Stage 1--Self-Exploration**

#### **Interests**

#### **Read Carefully To Get Best Results.**

It only makes sense that your career will provide more enjoyment and a greater sense of fulfilment if you find the work you do interesting. So, it's a good idea to begin your self-exploration by finding where your interests lie. The exercise on the next page can help you identify some of your key interests.

1. At this early stage don't worry about:

- Whether or not you are good at things on the following list.
- How long you have to go to school.
- How much the salary is.
- How good the future is for this career.

2. You **MUST** pick 5 interests on the next page. No more no less.

3. There are no right or wrong answers. Just pick interests you would like to know more about.

4. Have fun...

## Interests

**Remember:** You have to pick exactly 5 to move to the next section.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managing projects/People        | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating fun events/Cooking     | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helping children/Youth          | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor activities/Environment              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting/Drawing/Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Repairing                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening/Understanding/Helping | <input type="checkbox"/> Investigating facts using Math/Science      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT/Computers                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening/Horticulture                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with animals                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public speaking                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Using office equipment/Managing information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports/Exercise                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement/Military                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Running my own business         | <input type="checkbox"/> Design/Decorating                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law/Politics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting/Finance                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Style/Fashion                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driving/Operating equipment     |  |

## Values

**Read Carefully To Get Best Results.**

Values are a fancy way of talking about what is important to you. In the example of buying a car it might be important that the car have certain features, such as automatic transmission or a CD player.

It is the same with your career choice. There are elements of a job that will be important to you. Some examples are:

- Salary.
- Free time for family and leisure.
- The amount of contact with people.
- How many years of training are required...

1. Answer with your "gut reaction." Don't take too long.
2. You MUST click 9 items to move on.
3. You may think of other important values as you work on this section. Write them down as well...

**Values** Choose one option from the column labeled 'Option1' or from 'Option2'. You can only move on to the next section when you have made 9 selections.

**OPTION 1**

**OPTION 2**

Most of my time with people   Most of my time with equipment or ideas or paper

2 or less years training   More than 2 years training

Benefitting society and other people   Focusing on my goals

Lead others and be responsible   Leave the tough calls to other people

Being creative and coming up with new ways of doing things   Following established ways of doing things

Focused on one or two tasks   Change and variety

A good salary I can depend on, maybe not the highest   I want to take the big gambles for big rewards! I might make nothing... I might make millions!

Having a set shedule for leisure time and family   Work that includes travel or non-standard work hours

Mostly working indoors   Mostly working outdoors

## Skills

Read Carefully To Get Best Results.

Skills are abilities that you have developed; things that you can **do**.

Sometimes people use the words talents or aptitudes as well. This isn't exactly right. Both an **aptitude** and a **talent** are abilities that come easily to you.

You can probably develop any skill you want whether or not you have the talent/aptitude.

What skills would you like to develop?

1. Answer with your "gut reaction." Don't take too long.
2. You **MUST** click 10 items to move on.
3. You may think of other skills, talents or aptitudes as you work on this section. Write them down as well...

## Skills

Select 10 skills that you **would like to have** or **have already**.

### Management Skills

- Getting things done on time
- Speaking to the public
- Coming up with solutions to problems
- Making a plan to get the job done
- Coming up with ways to do things quicker
- Explaining ideas to people
- Getting people motivated to work
- Convincing people
- Organize work for people to do

### Helping Skills

- Coach/Teach
- Care for people
- Help people find compromises
- Understand how others feel
- Provide assistance to people who are hurt
- Listen and provide advice
- Put people at ease
- Inspire people
- Give tactful feedback

- Decide and accept responsibility
- Encourage people to talk

### **Physical Skills**

- Put things together/Build
- Raise/Train animals
- Grow plants
- Operate vehicles
- Check/Find errors in projects
- Use tools
- Find mechanical problems and fix them
- Playing/Coaching sports
- Following blueprints
- Protect others/Enforce rules

### **Organization Skills**

- Budget
- Create memos/Letters
- Check numbers/Documents for accuracy
- Take inventory
- Keep information organized
- Accounting
- Use a spreadsheet
- Work with a database
- Create presentations
- Type quickly

### **Scientific Skills**

- Read/Understand technical subjects
- Solving complex problems
- Come up with ideas about how things work
- Do research/Experiments
- Summarize ideas
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Math
- Computers
- Gather facts

### **Innovation Skills**

- Draw realistically
  - Find complimentary colors
  - Improvise/Tell jokes
  - Sing, dance, act
  - Cook/Decorate
  - Create computer graphics
  - Create artwork
  - Come up with new ways of seeing things
  - Design things on paper
  - Write well
-

## Traits

### Read Carefully To Get Best Results.

Traits are characteristics of you. They describe how you usually act. Knowing about your traits and how you most naturally behave helps you select occupations which fit with your style.

These aren't all the traits in the world, but a few to get you started thinking about the kind of person you are. For example, if you tend toward being outspoken with people you might enjoy a career in public relations. Someone who is quieter by nature might enjoy something else, such as being a carpenter.

Ask people you are close to describe you. They can sometimes see traits we can not.

In the next section:

1. Answer with your "gut reaction." Don't take too long.
2. You MUST click 5 items to move on.
3. You may think of other traits or qualities that you possess as you work on the following section. Write them down as well...

## METHOD 2

### Career Planning

This second option for career exploration is more open ended than the first method. It is also more comprehensive. It will require more of your time, but will reward you in the end with a solid base for exploring different career options.

Sometimes, people who go through this self exploration exercise are frustrated because it doesn't provide a final solution for their career plan. In fact, the purpose of this exercise is **NOT** to provide you with a career option, but to help you identify the **expectations** you have for a career



This exercise, will help you take what you already know about yourself and apply it to your career search, saving yourself a great deal of time when considering your options.

Many people make impulsive career choices based on the allure of money or because someone told them they should go in a particular direction. Often they spend years in school and find themselves in a job that they consider unfulfilling or perhaps too stressful. Usually at that point they begin to think about what they really want out of life, and out of their job. Well, that is the point of this particular exercise, to get you thinking about what you really want before spending time and money on an education and career that are a bad fit.

**One important note:** For these inventories to function correctly, you **MUST** have Javascript and cookies enabled in your browser. Follow the instructions carefully, or your work will not be saved (all work is saved in the cookie on your computer, not on our servers). If you type in your name and click on the 'Update' button only to find that your name is not being accepted, STOP. Something is not functioning correctly (Javascript or cookies are not enabled on your browser).

You should see a summary of your answers when you click the 'Proceed' button following each series of questions. If you do not see a summary, you are experiencing Javascript or cookie errors. If you are experiencing these kinds of difficulties, you can still do the exercises, just print out each page before continuing to the next step, so you have a record of your answers (you may want to print out each summary page anyway).

This exercise has three-steps. Click on the next button in the navigation strip at the bottom of each page to continue on to the next exercise. By the end you should find it easier to focus on best-fit career options when conducting your career exploration.

- 1** [Self Evaluation](#) - Knowing your interests, values, skills, and personal traits will dramatically increase your odds of finding a satisfying career.
- 2** [Career Exploration](#) - What career possibilities are out there? And how do you find out which occupations you will like? We'll help you out.
- 3** [Choosing a Career](#) - Perhaps the toughest part of the whole process.

## Career Planning

### Self Exploration

The first step in choosing a career path is to learn a little more about yourself. What do you like? What is important to you? What are you good at? Before you can find a career that is right for you, you have to know who **you** are.

The next few pages contain some tools that will help you in your self-exploration. The more of these activities you complete, the clearer will be the picture of who you are.

**A Note About These Tools:** The most common problem people experience with the inventories is that the "javascript" and "cookies" functions have been disabled in their web browser (Netscape or Internet Explorer recommended) - these must be active for the inventories to work. (If you are working on a networked computer, these functions may have been disabled by the system administrator and will require that you contact said administrator.)

**Another Note About These Tools:** Another common problem experienced with the assessment/inventories is "user expectation." The inventories will not suggest a specific career (i.e. "You will be a nuclear physicist!"). They are tools to help you gather information about yourself. Career Planning is very much a process that will continue throughout your life. The more work and research you put into it now, the better off you will be in the future. The proceed buttons merely provide a summary of your answers, not an interpretation. The reliability and validity of the "results" then will be entirely dependent upon how honest one is when completing the checklists. Enjoy the trip!

Want an interesting career? Start by finding out what your interests are. Complete this activity to find out [what turns you on](#).



Your values will also have a large impact on whether you find a particular career fulfilling. Here's an exercise to help you find out what is [important](#) to you.

Here is another activity to help you determine your priorities. This one concentrates on your [lifestyles values](#).





While some skills are transferable to many different situations, others are unique to particular jobs. This exercise will help you discover your [job-related skills](#).



Still want to find out more about yourself? The Internet has a lot of [resources](#) that can help you in your self-exploration.

Interests and values are only one part of self-exploration. You will also want to know what you are good at. Start by identifying some of your [transferable skills](#).



Knowing your skills will help you understand what you are good at. Another important part of the puzzle is understanding *how* you do what you do: your [style](#) or [personal traits](#).



## What Turns You On?

It only makes sense that your career will provide more enjoyment and a greater sense of fulfilment if you find the work you do interesting. So it's a good idea to begin your self-exploration by finding out where your interests lie. "What turns you on" is a great start to discovering what is going to make you happy.

**Before you begin, here are a few tips to make this a more successful experience.**

1. **Share your findings** with someone. Find a friend, parent or someone else you feel comfortable with. Have them read the [How to be Supportive](#) section.
2. There are no right or wrong responses, just **be honest** with yourself.

**Now...**

1. **Enter your name and click on the update button.**
2. Go through the list below and choose the activities you enjoy by clicking on "**interest**" in the drop-down menu beside each choice.

- Now, go through the list again and choose your **Top 5** interests from those you chose in Step 2.
- Click the **proceed** button and you will receive a list of your choices which you can print out for your records.

Enter your name:

never ▾	Organizing people	never ▾	Teaching
never ▾	Cooking	never ▾	Music
never ▾	Child care	never ▾	Decorating
never ▾	Outdoor activities	never ▾	Drawing/Painting
never ▾	Reading	never ▾	Writing
never ▾	Mathematics	never ▾	Working with cash
never ▾	Acting	never ▾	Keeping things orderly
never ▾	Making things	never ▾	Designing
never ▾	Using tools	never ▾	Working with facts
never ▾	Inventing	never ▾	Dancing
never ▾	Fixing things	never ▾	Entertaining
never ▾	Solving problems	never ▾	Collecting information
never ▾	Being expressive	never ▾	Science experiments
never ▾	Learning	never ▾	Making money
never ▾	Environmentalism	never ▾	Being imaginative
never ▾	Crafts	never ▾	Volunteering
never ▾	Selling	never ▾	Gardening
never ▾	Helping people	never ▾	Being sociable
never ▾	Working with animals	never ▾	Religion
never ▾	Collecting things	never ▾	Public speaking
never ▾	Managing a project	never ▾	Starting a project
never ▾	Using office equipment	never ▾	Travelling
never ▾	Sports	never ▾	Listening
never ▾	Exercise	<input type="button" value="Proceed"/>	

## What's Important to You?

Everyone has **values**. Values are our beliefs and principles about what is really important or worthwhile, and they guide our behaviours and the choices we make throughout life. Our values are influenced by a number of things, such as upbringing, family, home life, culture and education.

The following activity will help you determine some of the **work values** that are important to you. Knowing your work values is important, because they will affect the amount of satisfaction and fulfillment you receive from whatever occupation or career you pursue.

### Directions:

1. **Enter your name and click the update button.**
2. Click the **S** values (or add your own) that you would most want to be a part of any occupation you choose.
3. Be as open and as honest as possible.
4. Click the "**proceed**" button.
5. Share your findings with a friend, parent or someone you feel comfortable with. Have them read the [How to be Supportive](#) section.

## Skills

Your skills are the abilities that you have gained by practice or by knowledge. **Talent** refers to your "*natural*" abilities; **skills** refer to your *learned* abilities.

If you are like many other people, you may have trouble identifying your skills, or think that you don't really have many. But we all have them. In fact, we all have hundreds of them! We'll help you identify some of these by looking at two main types of skills:

- **Transferable skills** - these are skills that you have been developing throughout your life and that you would use in a wide variety of situations.
- [Job-related skills](#) - also called technical skills, these are skills that are used in a particular job or cluster of jobs.

## Transferable Skills Checklist

### Directions

1. **Type in your name and click the update button.**
2. Go through the list below and choose the skills you possess by clicking on "yes" in the drop-down menu beside each choice.
3. Now, go through the list again and choose your **Top 5** skills from those you chose in Step 2.
4. Click the "**proceed**" button and you will receive a list of your choices which you can print out for your records.

#### Key Skills

*(These skills tend to get you higher levels of responsibility and pay. They are worth emphasizing in an interview!)*

no	▼	Meet deadlines	no	▼	Speak in public
no	▼	Supervise others	no	▼	Accept responsibility
no	▼	Solve problems	no	▼	Plan
no	▼	Understand/manage bud	no	▼	Increase efficiency
no	▼	Instruct others	no	▼	Manage money
no	▼	Manage people	no	▼	Work with the public
no	▼	Organize/manage projec			
<b>Using my hands/Dealing with things</b>					
no	▼	Assemble/construct	no	▼	Raise/train/tend animals
no	▼	Grow plants	no	▼	Drive/operate vehicles
no	▼	Draw	no	▼	Observe/inspect
no	▼	Operate tools, machines	no	▼	Repair
no	▼	Move things	no	▼	Make things
<b>Dealing with data</b>					
no	▼	Analyse data	no	▼	Audit records
no	▼	Budget	no	▼	Calculate/compute
no	▼	Check for accuracy	no	▼	Classify data
no	▼	Compare/compile	no	▼	Order
no	▼	Memorize	no	▼	Evaluate
no	▼	Investigate	no	▼	Keep records
no	▼	Organize information	no	▼	Manage money
no	▼	Observe/inspect	no	▼	Schedule
no	▼	Inspect	no	▼	Research
no	▼	Synthesize	no	▼	Take inventory

### Working with people

no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Administer	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coach
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Care for others	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enforce
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Confront others	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Persuade
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Counsel	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Serve
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sensitive
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Present	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Entertain
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help others	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Instruct
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listen	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interview	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teach
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Co-operate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentor
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspire			

### Using words/ideas

no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Articulate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicate verbally	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promote
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspond	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create new ideas	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public speaking
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Design	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Remember information
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Write clearly	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Edit
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Summarize			

### Creative/Artistic

no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Design	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Perform, act
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Draw/paint	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Present artistic ideas
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improvise	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dance

### Leadership

no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange social functions	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negotiate
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facilitate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decide	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervise
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delegate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Initiate
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Direct others	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct meetings
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain things to others	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lead
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mediate	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Motivate
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Solve problems	no	<input type="checkbox"/>	Run a business

## Job-Related Skills

**J**ob-related skills are technical skills that are used in a particular job. For example, a secretary needs to be able to type, a mechanic must be familiar with a variety of tools and repair procedures, and a cashier needs to know how to make change and operate a cash register. Job-related skills might be applicable to several different jobs or a cluster of related jobs, but they are not transferable to as wide a variety of jobs as are transferable skills.

**E**ven if you have not yet worked at the job you want, you probably have some experience and skills that are needed. These can come from several sources:

- courses you have taken
- other jobs or volunteer work
- hobbies, family activities and other experiences.

**E**very occupation will have different job-related skills. Later, when you start researching different career options, you will find out what technical skills are needed for each occupation. The exercise below will help you determine which of these skills you already possess, and which you need to acquire. If you already have a career option in mind, you can try the exercise now, or you can come back to it later when you start to identify some career alternatives.

### Directions

1. **Type in your name and click the update button.**
2. **Type the name** of the occupation you are interested in.
3. **List** some job-related skills you have already acquired for that occupation.
4. Click the **proceed** button
5. **Print** the returned list of your job related skills.

## Personal Traits

**Y**our **personal traits** refer to the style or manner in which you interact with the world. They refer more to *how* you do things rather than *what* you do. For example you may have chosen the ability to persuade others as one of your transferable skills. The personal traits that help you accomplish this may include self-confidence, assertiveness, and an emotional style. Or you may use a completely different set of traits, such as being rational, logical, and trustworthy.

**T**he following checklist will help you identify some of your personal traits.

### Directions



1. **Enter your name and click the update button.**
2. **Check the traits** that apply to you by clicking in the box beside the trait. You can also add several traits you may have that are not listed at the end of the checklist.
3. Be as open and as **honest** as possible. Check the traits you truly believe you have, and not those that you feel are desirable.
4. Click the "**proceed**" button.
5. **Share your findings** with a friend, parent or someone you feel comfortable with. Have them read the [how to be supportive](#) section. Do they recognize personal traits in you that you may not be aware of?

Key traits (Employers value these personal traits very highly. They often won't hire a person who does not have or use most or all of these traits.)

<input type="checkbox"/> self-esteem and confidence	<input type="checkbox"/> honesty, integrity, ethics
<input type="checkbox"/> positive attitude to work	<input type="checkbox"/> energetic
<input type="checkbox"/> responsible	<input type="checkbox"/> get along with others

## Other Self-Management Skills

<input type="checkbox"/> punctual	<input type="checkbox"/> patient
<input type="checkbox"/> assertive	<input type="checkbox"/> learn quickly
<input type="checkbox"/> flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> mature
<input type="checkbox"/> dependable	<input type="checkbox"/> complete assignments
<input type="checkbox"/> sincere	<input type="checkbox"/> thoughtful
<input type="checkbox"/> friendly	<input type="checkbox"/> good sense of humour
<input type="checkbox"/> committed	<input type="checkbox"/> motivated
<input type="checkbox"/> professional	<input type="checkbox"/> creative
<input type="checkbox"/> persistent	<input type="checkbox"/> considerate
<input type="checkbox"/> results-oriented	<input type="checkbox"/> conscientious
<input type="checkbox"/> inquisitive	<input type="checkbox"/> reflective
<input type="checkbox"/> kind	<input type="checkbox"/> ambitious
<input type="checkbox"/> reserved	<input type="checkbox"/> thorough
<input type="checkbox"/> curious	<input type="checkbox"/> logical
<input type="checkbox"/> analytical	<input type="checkbox"/> methodical
<input type="checkbox"/> supportive	<input type="checkbox"/> attentive to detail
<input type="checkbox"/> tenacious	<input type="checkbox"/> sensitive
<input type="checkbox"/> open minded	<input type="checkbox"/> good natured
<input type="checkbox"/> competitive	<input type="checkbox"/> practical
<input type="checkbox"/> meticulous	<input type="checkbox"/> outgoing

<input type="checkbox"/> meticulous	<input type="checkbox"/> outgoing
<input type="checkbox"/> calm	<input type="checkbox"/> careful
<input type="checkbox"/> stable	<input type="checkbox"/> modest
<input type="checkbox"/> take initiative	<input type="checkbox"/> tough
<input type="checkbox"/> cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/> optimistic
<input type="checkbox"/> trusting	<input type="checkbox"/> trustworthy
<input type="checkbox"/> independent	<input type="checkbox"/> enthusiastic
<input type="checkbox"/> discreet	<input type="checkbox"/> witty
<input type="checkbox"/> empathetic	<input type="checkbox"/> willing to learn
<input type="checkbox"/> loyal	<input type="checkbox"/> realistic
<input type="checkbox"/> understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> risk-taking
<input type="checkbox"/> easy-going	<input type="checkbox"/> sociable

### Self-Exploration Resources on the Internet



Looking for some more resources that can help you get a complete picture of your interests, values, skills, and personal traits? Hey, you can never know enough about yourself! The better you know what you like, what you are good at, and who you are, the more likely you will be able find a career you enjoy and actually look forward to going to work each day.

**Bookmark our site**, and then check out some of the links we have provided below. Don't forget to come back when you're done!

### Assessments, Inventories, Checklists, and Activities

#### [Career Development Manual](#)

This was one of the first career development tools on the Internet, and is still one of the best. Although a bit text-heavy, it covers all areas of the career planning process. If you are mainly

interested in learning more about yourself, check out Step 1 in the manual, entitled Self Assessment. From Career Services at the University of Waterloo.

### **[Self-Assessment via MazeMaster](#)**

Includes three exercises to help you identify your interests, values, and skills.

### **[Knowyourtype.com](#)**

Knowyourtype.com is the first site to offer the world famous Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument online. This simple to take 93 question assessment tells you your specific type. Type is invaluable for everyone in issues of career, family, relationships and spirituality. (This is a fee-for-service site.)

### **[WorkSearch](#)**

Another Canadian Government site "to help you get the work you want."

### **[The Princeton Review Career Quiz](#)**

Answer 24 questions and you will be given a profile of your most likely interests and work style, and a list of careers that match your personality. (Formerly the Birkman Quiz)

### **[The Career Key](#)**

Promoted as "a free public service to help people make sound career decisions" and based on the six Holland personality types. You will get a sense of what Holland personality types most closely represent you, and a list of occupations that will match each personality type.

### **[The Keirsey Temperament Sorter](#)**

This is a personality test developed by David Keirsey and based on Carl Jung's theory of "psychological types." The test uses 70 questions with A or B answers to identify which of four temperament types you belong to. This should be used only to give you an idea of your personality type; the Keirsey temperament sorter, "like *all* personality tests, is only a preliminary and rough indicator of personality."

### **[IPIP-NEO](#)**

The International Personality Item Pool Representation of the NEO PI-R measures normal differences in personality. It contains 300 items and thus requires a significant time commitment. The report estimates your standing on 5 broad personality domains and 30 subdomains.

### **[3 Steps Career Quiz](#)**

From the School Finder On-line website.

# CAREER EXPLORATION

**Now that you have learned a lot more about who you are--your interests and values, your talents and skills, and your personal traits--you are ready to start exploring your career options.**

But where do you start? Experts estimate that there are somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 different occupations in today's work world. That is a lot of starting points! Fortunately, you won't have to go through all 10,000 options to find a suitable occupation.

There are two main steps you will want to follow as you do your career exploration:

**1** Your first step should be to create a [list of different occupational choices](#) that might match what you like and what you are good at. At this stage you should try to cast your net as wide as possible; you can throw away the little or unappealing fish later.

**2** Once you have hauled in your catch of possible occupations, your next step will be to sift through these and [narrow down your options](#) to the two or three most suitable candidates for your dream job.

This process won't be completely linear, and you might often find yourself going back and forth between the two steps. You might do a little research as you create your list of different occupations, and later, as you do your research, you may come across different occupations you want to add to your list from Step 1.

We've put together a list of [Internet resources](#) that will help you out in both steps of the career exploration process.

## **Broaden Your Career Options**

Naturally, your first step in exploring your career options will be to determine which careers to explore. You may already have some possible options in mind. But don't forget that there are literally thousands of possible career options in the world of work, and there may be some that

you haven't thought of that would be good careers for you. So before you begin researching different occupations, you will want to do a little brainstorming to broaden your career options.

### **1** Brainstorm on your own:

- Before you began the career planning process, you probably had a few, or perhaps many, occupations you were considering. Write them down.
- Remember when your parents, relatives, teachers, and almost everyone but the family pet used to ask you what you wanted to be when you grew up. (Maybe they still do). What did you answer? Write these down too.
- Look back at your list of values, interests, skills, talents, and traits. Can you think of any occupations that might match up well with these characteristics?

### **2** Brainstorm with others:

- Talk with your friends. Talk with your parents. Talk with your teachers, neighbours, relatives, co-workers. Talk with the guy who delivers your pizza. Talk with anyone who will listen to you. Let them know you are trying to figure out "what to do with the rest of your life." Let them know what you are interested in and what you are good at. Believe me, they'll have no shortage of suggestions!
- Remember, at this point you are just trying to build up a large list of occupations. Don't dismiss any suggestions out of hand, but don't make any commitment to them either.

### **3** Check the fine print:

- Check out your local school, university, library, employment centre, or career centre. They will all have a wide variety of resources that discuss the career options open to you, as well as knowledgeable people that will be glad to help you find information to help you in your exploration.

### **4** Surf the 'Net:

- The Internet has a lot of tools that can help you think of possible career options. The link at the end of this paragraph will take you to some of these resources. But just one more reminder that at this stage you are trying to build up a wide base of occupational options. When you go to these websites, you might want to simply look through the titles of occupations and write down those which sound interesting. Don't get too caught up in learning a lot about these occupations at this point. (Don't worry, you'll have lots of opportunity to research these later!) Now ... on to [THE RESOURCES](#).

## Research Career Options

Once you have hauled in your catch of possible occupations, you are ready to narrow these down and find the two or three that look like the most suitable candidates for your dream job.

How do you do this? By **RESEARCHING**. Finally, the opportunity you've been waiting for! Okay, I'll cut the sarcasm. This step is going to be time-consuming. But if you do your homework and spend a little time thoroughly researching and narrowing down your options, you just might end up with a lifetime of fulfillment and satisfaction rather than a lifetime of drudgery and regret. The choice is yours.

To help you minimize the time you have to spend in this stage of your career exploration, we've listed several different research methods you can use, in rough order of the time commitment they will require. You will want to use a variety of these methods, but start with those that take less effort first as you narrow down your options, and then use those that require more time as you get down to the few that are your most suitable options.

- [The Internet](#)
- [Libraries and employment and career centres](#)
- [Labour Market Information](#)
- [Informational interviewing](#)
- [Volunteering](#)
- [Working part-time](#)
- [Work abroad](#)

As you gather your information, you may want to use our [career possibilities worksheet](#) to keep track of what you have learned. Print off as many copies as you need to organize information on all your career options.

### The Internet

As you found out when you were brainstorming for career options, there are a lot of [Internet resources](#) with occupational information. There are many other places on the Internet you can go to research individual occupations. These include websites of associations, homepages of companies who employ people in the specific occupation, and newsgroups related to particular occupations.

### Libraries, employment and career centres

As well as electronic resources, there are also many print resources you can use to research different occupations. Again, many of the resources you used to brainstorm about occupational options can be used to do further research. And one advantage libraries and employment and career centres have over the Internet is that they have knowledgeable staff that can help you find the information you need. Plus, it's a chance to get out of the house!

### Labour Market Information

One of the things you may want to take into consideration when researching a career is labour market information about your occupational options. Labour market information focuses on such things as working conditions, wages, trends, qualifications, and employer demands, as well as other factors which affect the market for labour.

- [The Facts about Labour Market Information](#). Unclear about what labour market information is and how you can use it in researching your career? This article, from our nextSteps magazine, will help clarify matters.
- [Labour market information](#) This site provides links to Alberta job futures, area profiles for Calgary and other Alberta communities, occupational profiles and labour market bulletins.

### **Informational Interviewing**

This is where you get a chance to reverse the roles. You become the interviewer, and the person with the job becomes the interviewee. The goal of this process is to gather information about a particular job or career directly from the "horse's mouth" to help you find out if it is the kind of job you would be interested in pursuing further.

- [Answers to Questions on Informational Interviewing](#): What is it? Why do one? Where can you find someone to interview? What should you ask? These questions, and more, are answered.

### **Volunteering**

Volunteering provides you with a number of advantages. It gives you a first-hand look at an occupation that you are considering as a career. It is also a great way to network, and if you find this is the job you want, you already have some built-in contacts with which to begin your job search. It also enhances your resumé; employers will be very impressed if you have volunteer experience in the area in which you are looking for work. Through volunteering, you may also find that the job is not all you thought it was; and you can then look for job opportunities in other areas.

- [Benefits to volunteering](#).
- [Volunteering](#) - check out this issue of nextSteps magazine.
- [Tips for using volunteer work to gain employment](#).
- [Volunteer Bulletin Board](#) - a list of volunteer opportunities on the web provided by CharityVillage, it includes a listing of volunteer opportunities available in Calgary.

### **Working part-time**

Like volunteering, working part-time gives you a chance to get a first-hand look at the job you are interested in and allows you to make contacts you can use as references for future jobs. Unlike volunteering, it allows you to earn some money while doing so.

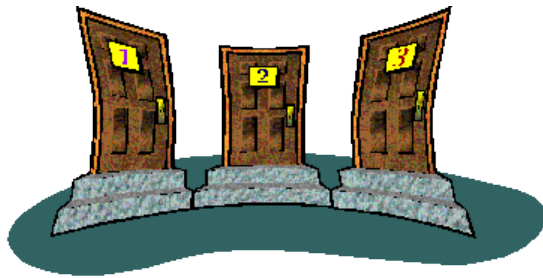
### **Work abroad**



Working abroad gives you the opportunity to combine a couple of objectives you might have for the future: travelling and career preparation. There is a wide variety of things you can do in foreign lands to gain job-related or transferable skills, while broadening your horizons and improving your self-management skills.

- [Working Abroad](#) - We devoted a whole issue of our nextSteps magazine to this topic. It's a great starting place to learn more about the working abroad option.
- **Print resources** - *The Canadian Guide to Working and Living Overseas*, by Jean-Marc Hachey, and *Work Your Way Around the World*, by Susan Griffith, are only two of many different books that will give you some idea of the opportunities available to you if you want to work abroad. Check your local school or public library, or a career or employment resource centre, for more.

### It's crunch time



You've come to the point where you have to make some choices. You've done a little "soul-searching" and learned more about yourself -- what you like, what you're good at, and what your values are. You've found some occupations that seem to match these aspects of your personality, and you've done the research and learned more about these particular occupations -- what they have to offer you and what you have to offer them.

The next step is to evaluate your options and make a choice. Deciding on your future is a big step. It is a step you will have to make, but you will want to be sure you consider all the options, think carefully about each, and weigh the positive and negative aspects of each. Even then, there may not be one choice that stands out above all others. There are over 7000 occupations in Canada, and there won't be one single one that suits you much better than all others. Your goal should be to find the **most appropriate** one, not the "correct" one.

### Steps in the decision making process

We've provided a five-step model below that might help you make your decision.

### **1** Name the decision.

Sounds obvious, but stating precisely the decision you have to make is very important. Writing down the decision in question format will help you clarify your decision and help you keep it in mind during the next four steps.

Eg.: "What occupation would I like to be in five years from now?"

### **2** List the alternatives.

Write down at least two answers to your question from the first step.

### **3** Evaluate the alternatives and decide.

One way you might do this is to write down the potential outcomes of each alternative (both positive and negative) for you and for others that are important to you.

This is probably the most difficult of the five steps. To help you out, here are two more exercises you can do to evaluate your options and make a choice from among them.

**[Occupation Evaluation Table](#) [Decision Matrix](#)**

### **4** Test your choice.

Think of ways to test the alternative you have chosen. For example, you might take a summer job in the field, take a course related to the chosen alternative, volunteer in the area, or shadow someone who works at the same occupation. You may already have done some of these things. If you haven't, and want to learn more about them, check out our section on researching your alternatives.

### **5** Evaluate your decision.

How well did your choice work? If you need to, you can start over again at step one.

## **The Decision Making Matrixes**

**Question:** What is the Matrix?

**Answer:** Its a great [movie](#) and a grid that helps you compare a number of factors in a single table. Don't be scared off by bad memories of your high school algebra -- we'll do all the math for you!

To use these tools successfully it is recommended that you:

1. Complete the relevant [personal inventories](#) in our self-exploration section. The three matrices here require the information identified from the interests, work values and transferable skills you identified in those activities.
2. Next, identify three career possibilities. If you do not yet have this information, return to the "[career possibilities section](#)" and find out your career possibilities.
3. Complete all three matrixes so that you have a thorough comparison of occupations.
4. [Review and interpret](#) your results.

Now, on to the matrices ...

[Interests Matrix](#) [Values Matrix](#) [Skills Matrix](#)

## Interests Matrix

### Directions:

- 1** Enter your name below and click on the **update** button.
- 2** Enter your **top five interests** In the "Interest" fields. (These will automatically be inputted if you have completed our [interest inventory](#).)
- 3** Enter your **top three career possibilities** along the top.
- 4** **Weight** the importance of each interest to you with a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being very important. How important is it that each interest be met in your career?
- 5** Under each career, **score** how much that interest will be met by that occupation. Score this as a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being very high.
- 6** Click the **Calculate Total** button and compare the resulting total values under each career. The highest total will indicate the career that will most likely match your interests.

Career:  Career:  Career:

Skill  Weight

Career #1 Score	Value	Career #2 Score	Value	Career #3 Score	Value
x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>

Skill  Weight

Career #1 Score	Value	Career #2 Score	Value	Career #3 Score	Value
x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>

Skill  Weight

Career #1 Score	Value	Career #2 Score	Value	Career #3 Score	Value
x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>

Skill  Weight

Career #1 Score	Value	Career #2 Score	Value	Career #3 Score	Value
x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>

Skill  Weight

Career #1 Score	Value	Career #2 Score	Value	Career #3 Score	Value
x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>	x <input type="text" value="1"/>	= <input type="text"/>

Total

Calculate

## Values Matrix

### Directions:

- 1** Enter your name below and click on the **update** button.
- 2** Enter your **top five values** in the "**Value**" fields. (These will automatically be inputted if you have completed our [work values inventory](#).)
- 3** Enter your **top three career possibilities** along the top.
- 4** **Weight** the importance of each value to you with a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being very important. How important is it that each value be met in your career?
- 5** Under each career, **score** how much that value will be met by that occupation. Score this as a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being very high.
- 6** Click the **calculate** button and compare the resulting totals under each career. The highest total will indicate the career that will most likely match your values.

Career:	<input type="text"/>	Career:	<input type="text"/>	Career:	<input type="text"/>
Value	<input type="text"/>	Weight	1		
Career #1 Score	Value	Career #2 Score	Value	Career #3 Score	Value
x 1	=	<input type="text"/>	x 1	=	<input type="text"/>
x 1	=	<input type="text"/>	x 1	=	<input type="text"/>
x 1	=	<input type="text"/>	x 1	=	<input type="text"/>
x 1	=	<input type="text"/>	x 1	=	<input type="text"/>
x 1	=	<input type="text"/>	x 1	=	<input type="text"/>
Total	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Calculate"/>					

## Skills Matrix

### Directions:

**1** Enter your name below and click on the **update** button.

**2** Enter your **top five transferable skills** in the "Skills" fields. (These will automatically be inputted if you have completed our [transferable skills inventory](#).)

**3** Enter your **top three career possibilities** along the top.

**4** **Weight** the importance of each skill to you with a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being very important. How important is it that each skill be used in your career?

**5** Under each career, **score** how much that skill will be used in that occupation. Score this as a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being very high.

**6** Click the **calculate** button and compare the resulting totals under each career. The highest total will indicate the career that will most likely involve your most important skills.

	Career:	Career:	Career:
Skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Weight	1	▼
	Career #1	Career #2	Career #3
	Score	Score	Score
	Value	Value	Value
	x 1	x 1	x 1
	▼	▼	▼
	=	=	=
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Weight	1	▼
	Career #1	Career #2	Career #3
	Score	Score	Score
	Value	Value	Value
	x 1	x 1	x 1
	▼	▼	▼
	=	=	=
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Weight	1	▼
	Career #1	Career #2	Career #3
	Score	Score	Score
	Value	Value	Value
	x 1	x 1	x 1
	▼	▼	▼
	=	=	=
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Weight	1	▼
	Career #1	Career #2	Career #3
	Score	Score	Score
	Value	Value	Value
	x 1	x 1	x 1
	▼	▼	▼
	=	=	=
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
			<input type="button" value="Calculate"/>

## Interpret the Matrix Results

Now that you have completed the three matrices, what do all these numbers mean? How can they help you make a decision?

The following are some ideas on how to use this information.

**1** The results here are only one reflection or piece of information to help you make a clear decision. Combined with all the other information you have collected and your gut feelings on the matter, they will help you make an informed choice about your future career.

**2** Total the three columns -- interests, values, and skills -- for each career.

**3** Compare the totals for each career. Why are they each different? Why is one higher than the others?

**4** Explore one of the careers further. What do you need to learn? What are the opportunities?

**5** Are there any other careers you want to compare? Are there different interests, values or skills you want to compare? You may want to redo the matrixes with different careers, or different interests, values, and/or skills.



# Education and Training

When investigating different career alternatives, one constant factor you have to consider is your level of skills, education, and training. Each occupation requires a particular set of them. Now that you have chosen a specific occupation as your dream job you will want to look again at exactly what qualifications are needed. (If you haven't done this step yet, now would be a good time to [do it](#).)

After you have identified the qualifications you need, the next step is to decide how you will go about acquiring those you don't have. Quite often, you will need to return for some type of schooling to get a specific degree, diploma or certificate. Or it may require developing certain skills through less formal channels.

Whichever route you need to take, keep the following points in mind:

- Double check the importance or necessity of the qualifications. If further schooling is needed, make sure the program or courses you enrol in are recognized by employers. This can't be stressed enough. You don't want to spend four years in college getting a degree that nobody in your chosen occupation accepts as valid.
- Contact the school or schools that offer the program you plan to take to make sure you have all the requirements you need to enrol in the program.
- Don't wait until the last minute to start investigating your options. Talk with your parents, teachers, or career counsellors about the choices you plan to make. The less hurried your decision, the more likely it will be the *right* decision.



There are a lot of different schools you can attend to [continue your education](#). Find the one that is right for you.

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[Apprenticeship programs](#) allow you to combine classroom education with on-the-job training.





There are lots of ways to gain skills and experience that don't involve formal education, such as [volunteering and working abroad](#).

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[Financial assistance](#) may play a role in determining what route you take to your future career.



## Continuing Your Education

What's the difference between a college and a university? What are vocational colleges, and what do they offer? Read on and we will tell you what we know.



- Find out about the [different educational institutions](#) that operate in Alberta.
- Certificate, diploma, degree . . . there are a lot of [different types of degrees](#) available in Alberta. Check out our short descriptions of each type.
- How do you go about [choosing a school](#) that is right for you? Here are a few suggestions.
- Know what program you want to attend, but unsure of what schools offer it? Check out some tools to identify [who offers what](#).

- Many schools, colleges, and universities have an Internet presence. Once you've chosen where you want to go, check out the [school's homepage](#) on the World Wide Web.
- Perhaps you would prefer to study at home. There are many options available in [Distance Education](#) on the World Wide Web. Have a look at some of them.

## Post-Secondary Institutions in Alberta

Wondering what the difference is between a university and a college? Looking for a quick description of a technical institute? There are a lot of different types of post-secondary institutions you can attend in Alberta and it can sometimes be confusing trying to figure out how one differs from another. The following list, developed by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, should give you an idea of the available post-secondary institutions and what each has to offer.

### Universities

- There are three traditional universities in Alberta: the [University of Alberta](#), the [University of Calgary](#), and the [University of Lethbridge](#). There is also one distance-learning university: [Athabasca University](#).
- Universities offer a wide range of programs through various departments and faculties, some of which include liberal arts, fine arts, sciences, social sciences and professional programs.
- Student populations at Alberta universities range from 3,500 to over 25,000 students.

### Colleges

- There are 11 public colleges, 7 affiliated and degree-granting private colleges, and numerous private and independent colleges in Alberta.
- Colleges offer programs ranging from general interest and academic upgrading to career training and university transfer.
- Many of these colleges provide one-year certificate and two-year diploma programs, as well as university transfer programs. Some colleges also offer Applied Degree programs.
- Colleges tend to have lower enrolments than universities, offering students smaller classes and a more close-knit environment.
- There are colleges throughout Alberta, which allows students the opportunity to begin their post-secondary studies in a location close to home.

- While some colleges have denominational affiliations, students of all faiths are generally welcome.

## Technical Institutes

- There are two technical institutes in Alberta: the [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology](#) (SAIT) in Calgary and the [Northern Alberta Institute of Technology](#) (NAIT) in Edmonton.
- Technical institutes offer one-year certificate, two-year diploma, apprenticeship and continuing education programs.
- Technical institutes attract students interested in a wide variety of technological/engineering-related fields.
- Technical institutes are responsive to labour market needs, and the programs they offer reflect this.

## Public Colleges

- There are several Public Colleges in the province: Bow Valley College (Calgary), NorQuest College (Edmonton), Northern Lakes College (Lesser Slave Lake) and Portage College (Lac La Biche) are among them.
- Many students attend these colleges to upgrade their current levels of education (from Grade 1 to Grade 12) and/or to obtain the job-related skills and life skills they need to get a job.
- Vocational programs are short, usually lasting one year or less.
- Programs are specialized and often created at the request of industry to train people for particular occupations.
- The college's form partnerships with business and industry to make sure their programs prepare students to succeed in the world of work.
- Most students have adult student status, meaning that they are at least 17 years of age and have been out of the school system for a year or more.

## Schools of Fine Arts

- The Banff Centre for Continuing Education and the Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary specialize in the fine arts of music, art, dance, and drama.
- Fine arts schools attract artists, musicians, and dancers of international acclaim as teachers and guest lecturers.
- Programs vary in length from six-week summer sessions to four-year degree programs.

## Private Vocational Schools

- Privately owned and operated vocational schools offer a variety of training programs. Most specialize in training students for particular occupations (eg. business and secretarial studies, drafting or beauty culture).
- There are over 100 registered and licensed private vocational schools in Alberta.

# The Different Degrees

When looking for a post-secondary institution to attend, you'll find that different schools offer different types of degrees when you graduate. What's the difference? Following is a list of the main types of degrees you can get and how they are different from each other. When making your choice of schools, make sure you know what type of degree they offer in your area, and what degree is needed in the career you have chosen.

## Certificate Programs

- Usually involve one year or less of full-time, practically-oriented study at a college, technical institute or vocational college, often in preparation for a particular type of employment.
- Admission generally requires completion of Grade 10 or higher, with specific grade and subject requirements. High school graduation may be the preferred qualification, especially for university-awarded certificates.

## Diploma Programs

- Usually involve two years of full-time study at a college or technical institute, often in preparation for employment at the technical level in specific fields.
- Admission generally requires high school graduation with specific grade and subject requirements.
- University-level diploma programs and those in the visual arts may involve up to four years of study.

## Applied Degree

- A four-year program consisting of six semesters (three years) of academic studies and two semesters (one year) of paid, related, supervised work experience.
- The programs provide enhanced career preparation that applies to a broader range of career and employment opportunities in industry that goes beyond entry into an industry or occupation.
- Entrance requirements are similar to those of diploma programs.

## Transfer Programs

- Transfer programs are one- or two-year programs offered by colleges with approved programs. They allow students to take part of a university program at a college before transferring to the appropriate university to complete their studies.
- Students should make sure of the transferability of their course choices with the university at which they intend to complete their studies. Not all college courses are transferable and not all universities recognize the same courses.
- Transfer students must still qualify for admission to the university programs they wish to complete.

## **Bachelor Degree Programs**

- Usually involves three or four years of full-time study at a university or accredited college.
- Admission generally requires a high school diploma with set averages in specified Grade 12 subjects. English 30 is always required. Faculties with limited enrolments may require higher minimum averages and specific Grade 12 subjects.
- Check with the university or college Registrar's office for each program's entrance requirements.

## **Master's Degree Programs**

- Usually involve a minimum of two terms of full-time study at a university while registered as a graduate student.
- Master's degree programs may or may not require the completion of a thesis.
- Admission generally requires the completion of a four-year or honours undergraduate degree.

## **Doctoral Degree Programs**

- PhD programs involve planning and carrying out research leading to advanced knowledge in the student's field of study.
- A doctorate usually requires two to three academic years of full-time study and research at a university while registered as a graduate student.
- Admission generally requires a Master's degree or equivalent education.

# **Choosing A School**

If your career path includes a pit stop to "fuel up" on greater knowledge or training, one of the first things you will have to do is choose the school where you will make this stop. Choosing the right school, college, technical institute or university is not always easy. There are a lot of options open to you, and you will have to consider a lot of factors before making your final decision.

To help make the process a little easier, we've put together a list of questions to ask yourself. The answers you give should help you make your final choice.

**Begin by considering your own interests and needs:**

**Get with the program.** Is there a particular program you want to attend? If your chosen career goal requires you to attend a specific post-secondary program or hold a specific degree, diploma or certificate, this may help you narrow your options down immediately.

- What schools offer the program?
- Is the program the same length at all of these schools?
- How do the programs at each school differ?
- Are the entrance requirements the same?
- Do you meet the requirements?

**Location, location, location.**

- Is living at home or in the same city important, or are you able/willing to go to school in another community?
- If you are willing to move, is there a limit on how far?
- Is there a particular community or part of the country you have always wanted to live in?
- What about the type of community? Would you like to live in a large city, or are you more comfortable in a smaller community?

When choosing a location, the wishes of family and friends may come into consideration. Your parents may want you to stay at home for a few more years (or maybe they think its time you finally get out of the house and give them some peace!). Or perhaps you want to go to the same college as all of your friends. While these may be legitimate considerations, they should not be overriding ones. Remember that while you want to listen to your parents (you do, don't you??) and be with your friends, it is **your** future that is at stake here. You have to look at the big picture, and do what you think will be best for you in the long run.

**The bottom line.** What can you afford?

When considering the cost of a post-secondary education, remember that while it may cost you a lot of money, it will also increase your earning potential. Investing in your education now may pay off in higher earnings in the future. Remember, too, that financial assistance may be available to help you pay for your education.

**But** even after considering the investment value of education and the possibility of financial assistance, cost may still be an important factor when choosing a school.

**On the side.** While your education is the most important consideration when choosing a school, there are other things you may find important when making your final choice. For many, college life is a time to explore new interests or to meet others who share the same interests. Check out the extra-curricular life at the schools you are considering. What clubs, groups, societies, and sports programs does the school offer? What is the social and cultural atmosphere like on campus?

**Consider the institution**

**Get with the program, II.** Does the institution offer the program or major which you want to study? Will you have to transfer to another school before you graduate? (A "yes" to this latter question should not necessarily eliminate the school. For example, there are many excellent two-year colleges that allow you to start your university education with them and then transfer to a larger university. However, it is important that you know this before entering the college, and that you know exactly where you will be able to finish up the degree, diploma or certificate you have started.)

**One size doesn't fit all.** Not everyone wants to attend the same size school. What size of school would you feel most comfortable at? Do you want to attend a small college, or are you interested in going to a larger institution?

Perhaps more important than size of the actual student body is the size of most of the classes. A small school usually means easier access to teaching and counselling, while larger schools tend to offer a greater diversity of activities and student backgrounds.

**Making the grade.** Before you let a school start grading your performance, you should grade its performance. What is the reputation of the school? Is the reputation of the program you want to take better, the same, or worse than the reputation of the school as a whole?

**Be careful** when trying to determine the reputation of the university or program. Different people will have different opinions about a school's value. While reputation is important, it is also very important to reach your own conclusions about the school and the program.

Most post-secondary institutions will have open houses, where you can take a look at the campus, find out more information about particular programs, and talk to students who are currently enrolled in the programs. Some institutions will have "Student for a Day" programs or something similar, where you can sit in on classes within your program of interest.

If the school you are considering is too far away for a personal visit, write the school and get a copy of their calendar and any other literature they would be willing to send you, such as admission and financial aid materials, and housing information. As well, they might be able to give you names of graduates who are living in your city and are willing to talk to you about the school.

**Doing the job.** Do graduates from the program you want to take find work easily? Do they find work quicker or slower than graduates from the same program at other universities? Job placement rates may be available for particular programs at a college, university or technical institute.

You may also want to check out what career and job placement services the post-secondary institution has. How vigorously does the school try to find jobs for its students once they graduate?

**Show me the money.** Does the institution offer some type of financial aid? The federal and provincial governments are a common source of financial assistance for your education. But the post-secondary institutions themselves can be another source of financial support. What type of scholarships, bursaries, or other aid do they provide and do you meet the qualifications to receive the aid?



**The body beautiful.** What is the makeup of the student body at the institution? Does the school have a religious affiliation? Is it important to you that it does or does not?

**Campus life.** Check out the campus.

- Where is it located?
- Are there a lot of accommodations close by or on the campus, or will you have to drive or ride to school?
- Is there good public transportation routes to the campus?
- What type of facilities are available on campus?
- What are the state of its library, computer labs, and science labs?
- What about recreational facilities, such as gymnasiums, swimming pools, outdoor sports facilities, theatres, etc.?

## Searching for Post-Secondary Programs

Once you have decided on the program that you want (or need) to take to get work in the occupation you have chosen for your career destination, your next step is to find out who offers this program. There are a few sites on the Internet that will help you out with this, and we provide links to these below. Remember, though, that the Internet is only one way to find out what schools offer what programs, and some of the websites may not always be comprehensive. Be sure to use a few other means of searching for this information. These other ways can include:

**T**alking to someone already working in the field. Want to be an architect? Talk to an architect. He or she will have gone through the same process of finding a school that your are now going through, and should know of at least some of the schools that offer the education you need.

**C**heck out print and other electronic resources. Your local college, school, and public libraries and employment centres should have books and/or computer programs that will list what institutions offer what programs.

### Internet Resources

#### [EDINFO](#)

From Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, EDINFO is a listing of educational programs offered by Alberta's post-secondary institutions, and distance learning courses offered in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Whether you are thinking of a Ph.D. in geophysics or a course in auctioneering, EDINFO will have the program for you. Search for programs offered by

a particular school, or search through an alphabetical list of programs to find out what schools offer each program.

### [Schoolfinder Search](#)

This Canadian site allows you to search for colleges and universities in Canada by several different criteria, including program, city population, entrance dates, language of instruction, school size, and tuition.

### [Find Your College](#)

From U.S. News, this search engine lets you look for American colleges by size, cost, major, and location.

### [ExPAN College Search](#)

Another American college search site. Allows you to focus your search quite well to very specific majors, and then provides a lot of information on each particular college you find that offers your programs.

### [CollegeView Search](#)

Yep. Yet another American college search site. Like ExPAN, it provides a lot of information on the different schools in its database. But it is heavy on graphics and can take a frustratingly long time to load.

## **Finding A School on the Internet**

Many schools have a presence on the World Wide Web. If you know that a certain school offers the program you want to take, you can usually find out more about it on the school's website. You can also find out more about the school itself, such as its size, location, amenities, facilities, campus maps, admissions procedures and tuitions, and student organizations.

### [Places to Learn](#)

Provides a listing of most of the post-secondary institutions in Alberta, divided alphabetically, by type of institution, or by location. A short description of each institution is provided, along with a link to their homepage if there is one.

### [Connect to Canada's Universities](#)

Looking for a particular university in Canada? This link will provide you with a list of universities arranged by geographical location or alphabetically. As well as direct links to the universities' home pages, they also provide a brief description of the university.

### [ACCC Member Institutions](#)

Looking for a particular community college? This link will take you to Canadian community colleges by geographical location.

### [Alberta Education Website](#)

This part of the Alberta Education website focuses on the Alberta education system. By clicking on the [School Choices](#) link in the left frame of their page, you can get links to secondary schools throughout the province that have their own websites.

### [U.S. Universities and Community Colleges](#)

An extensive list of American community colleges and universities arranged alphabetically and by state.

## Distance Education

If you are considering a career requiring post-secondary education or training, distance learning should be explored. Although not suited for everyone, distance learning (or distance education) can hold advantages over traditional classroom learning. Not only can you take courses part-time while continuing to work, you can often complete the required work from the comfort of your home, at a time that best fits your schedule. Before spending any time seeking courses and schools, determine if you can be successful enrolling in a distance learning program.

### **Am I compatible?**

The best method of effective learning varies from one person to the next. Those who answer "yes" to the following questions are more likely to attain better results through distance education than those who answer "no."

Consider these simple questions:

- Have I ever voluntarily picked up a book to learn something specific?
- Did I learn what I hoped I would?
- Do I work well with minimal supervision?
- Do I know the best way for me to learn new information?
- Am I computer, and Internet literate?
- Am I disciplined enough to set aside sufficient time every



day to complete assignments effectively?

For a further analysis of your potential to succeed in distance learning, try this self-assessment. ([Self Assessment](#))

## **Moving on**

As distance learning continues to grow as an effective method for delivering education and training, more professional associations, employers, and other post-secondary institutions will "accept" course work completed via this method. Higher learning is always valued, the trick is ensuring your choices are high quality. So, before signing up for any distance learning opportunity, give this general information additional thought.

## **Acceptance -- employers**

Many employers acknowledge a degree/diploma/certificate obtained through distance education on par with those obtained through traditional methods. These employers believe those who have committed long enough to complete the requirements have the potential to make good employees.

On the other hand, some employers are wary of obtaining education or training via this method. If you have targeted a few specific employers, contact them to determine if they recognize distance learning achievements. For those careers requiring licensing through a professional body, such as engineers, direct contact with that group will help you decide if distance education is a possibility.

## **Acceptance -- other institutions**

Again, this is another some will, some will not scenario. If you are trying to take courses via distance learning from one institution for credit at another institution, make direct inquiries. Do not begin any course in this situation before having a firm answer, just in case the answer is "no." For those considering study abroad, visit the [Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials](#).

Some institutions may require an assessment of previous courses, or work experience, before offering you credit. This assessment may come in the form of a written test to prove what you have learned.

You may also be asked to send in detailed course descriptions to receive credit for any previous work. There will likely be fees for this type of assessment in the neighborhood of \$50 - \$100 per course to a set maximum amount of \$300 or so for all your courses. The criteria to receive credit, and the requirements to have courses assessed, will vary from place to place.

## **What's available?**

The idea of distance education has been around for years. Now, almost any course, program, or training you can think of is available. Courses or programs requiring mainly reading and writing are widely available through distance learning, however, more technical based training, such as computer programming and some apprenticeship training, are also available.

All that said, numerous other factors have to be considered before rushing off to sign up for the first distance learning course you hear about. Keep in mind the information you uncover during your research before coming up with a final decision on distance education.

## **Online programming**

After determining which career path interests you most, find the institutions offering a related program. If you are not comfortable using computers and the Internet to complete this research, consider re-taking the self-assessment quiz. Visit [our page](#) for links to help determine which traditional schools offer which programs and courses. Many private businesses and institutions also offer distance learning opportunities, consider investigating their options as well.

As more and more distance education possibilities come available, be sure the programs you research meet the majority of your needs. Informational interviews with people working in the field you are considering, or talking with employers in your area, will help determine which courses are the right fit for you. Taking an equal amount of time to talk with course or program instructors/administrators will also help determine which distance learning route to take.

When comparing programs and institutions consider:

- the cost -- Is [financial assistance](#) available for this course/program? Why is one more than another? What is included in those costs (videos, text books etc.)? What can you afford given your current circumstances?
- the help available -- Are there on-line counsellors? Are there any kind of tutoring/mentorship arrangements possible? Is there a library of resources I can access easily?
- the name -- Do employers or other institutions recognize the institution offering your chosen course/program?
- the instructors -- Who are the instructors? Is information on their qualifications available? Will you have access to them?
- graduate success -- What percentage of people graduate from your chosen program? What percentage of people find related work after graduating from your chosen program?
- institution affiliations -- Are the institutions I am considering affiliated with any distance learning associations? Why, or why not? ([Click here](#) to link to Canadian and international distance education organizations.)

With a little bit of hard work exploring distance learning's possibilities, success can soon be yours.

## Choosing the Apprenticeship Route

Ever think of becoming a world-class chef? Maybe plumbing, bricklaying, or hairstyling is the right career for you. From agricultural mechanic to welder, there are over 50 trades in Alberta you can learn through becoming an apprentice.

Apprenticeship is a method of learning the skills and knowledge it takes to become a journeyman (the term refers to women as well as men). On-the-job-training under the supervision of a qualified tradesperson is supplemented with classroom training. Depending on the trade, it can take between one and four years to complete an apprenticeship program. Over 5,000 men and women enter an Alberta apprenticeship program every year.

[Apprenticeship and Industry Training Home Page](#) - If you are looking for information on apprenticeship opportunities in Alberta, this is an excellent place to start. Click on the link for potential apprentices and find information on what apprenticeship is, what trades you can enter as an apprentice, and how you can take the plunge. There are also links to general information about apprenticeship in other Canadian provinces and other countries around the world. They even provide the option of downloading an application.

[CAREERS: The Next Generation Foundation](#) - The Foundation focuses its efforts on two programs that address the need for skilled tradespeople in Alberta, RAP PLUS and Co-op PLUS. RAP PLUS let students become apprentices while still in high school, while Co-op PLUS introduces recent high school graduates into the trades.

## Informal Ways of Gathering Experience

### Working Abroad

If you are interested in travelling and have always wanted to spend some time in a foreign country, working abroad may be one way to kill two birds with one stone. It allows you to cure the travel itch, and at the same time you can gather some valuable work experience that will help you get a little further on the road to your career destination.



Make sure to decide which of these "two birds" is most important to you. If your primary objective is to spend a fair amount of time in a certain country and to experience its culture, you may be more flexible in the type of work you are willing to do. If your primary goal is to advance your career, than you may want to be more selective in the job you choose.

- [So You Want To Work Abroad?](#) - From the University of Waterloo. Asks you why you want to work abroad, tells you how to go about preparing for it, and provides a list of additional resources you can use to further research this option.
- [Going Abroad](#) - Documents on working abroad produced by the Government of Canada.
- [International Jobs](#) -Search for international job opportunities.
- [nextSteps - Working Abroad](#) This issue looks at many of the pros and cons of working overseas.

## Volunteering

We've all seen the ads that state "experience required." Frustrating, aren't they? How are you supposed to acquire the experience if no one will give you a job unless you have experience?

One thing you might do to gain experience is to volunteer. Volunteering no longer means simply baking Rice Krispie cake for the church fundraiser or mowing your grandparents' lawn once a week. Today you can volunteer for hundreds of different organizations, and develop many of the same skills you could develop in a paid position. If you spend some time finding the right position, volunteering will allow you to develop skills and give you the valuable experience you need to find paid employment in your chosen occupation.

- Check out the [benefits of volunteering](#).
- **If you decide that volunteering is an option you want to pursue, your next step is to [find the right position](#).**
- **Once you have found a volunteer position, there are a few things you should do to [make sure the experience will help you get paid employment](#).**
- [nextSteps - Volunteering](#) This issue looks at many benefits of volunteering..

# The Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to help out other people in your community. The best volunteering should involve a genuine desire to help others. But this does not mean that the experience can't provide some very tangible benefits to you as well.

Here are some reasons why you might want to volunteer:

- It allows you to explore career options. If you aren't completely sure that a certain occupation is the one for you, volunteering gives you a chance to learn more about it before you make a commitment. Like informational interviewing or job shadowing, volunteering provides you with a chance to research the career alternatives open to you.

- It is a great way to develop new skills. For some jobs, formal education or training may not be required but employers will want you to possess certain skills. Volunteering is a way to develop skills that you can transfer to the occupation of your choice.

- It is a way to gain valuable career-related experience. Some occupations will require you to possess a certain certificate or degree. But employers will also want you to have experience. So even if you have the skills and education you need, volunteering can offer you the chance to apply these skills in a "real-world" environment and provide the practical experience many employers look for.

- You can meet new people. This is good in its own right, and it also allows you to establish some important networking contacts you might use to find a paying job or as references.

- Volunteer positions can often involve a large degree of responsibility, if that is what you are looking for. This will allow you to exercise leadership, develop problem-solving skills and be creative.

Even if you already have the skills you need, the experience employers are looking for, and the job you want, volunteering can still benefit you:


- It provides the opportunity to develop new skills and pursue new interests. You can never have too many skills. Developing new skills and learning new things are valuable in their own right, and not just a way to further your career.

- Volunteering gives you a chance to share your knowledge and expertise with others. It can be very rewarding and fulfilling to know that all the training and education received has more value than simply putting food on your table (not to say that this isn't a valid reason for developing your skills and knowledge base in itself!).

- Whether you are learning new skills or developing skills you already have, volunteering





provides the opportunity for you to gain confidence and self-esteem.


 It allows you to get involved in your community and to make an impact on the lives of those in need. Volunteering will give you the chance to learn more about the community, society and environment in which you live.


## Choosing the Right Volunteer Position


If you decide that volunteering is an option you want to pursue, your next step is to find the right position. There are several things you need to consider when choosing a volunteer position.


 Think about why you are volunteering. Is it to develop new skills and learn new things? Is it to help others? Is it to gain experience in the occupation of your choice?


 Think about what skills you have to offer and what skills you would like to develop (job-related skills, transferable skills, and self-management skills).

 Think about what causes or issues matter the most to you, and what particular organisations work in these areas. Ask friends, relatives, teachers, career counsellors or a volunteer centre for ideas.

 Think about what types of things you like to do.

 Think about what types of things you don't want to do. There's nothing wrong with identifying certain things you don't want to do as a volunteer. Don't feel you have to agree to any type of volunteer work.

 Think about how much time you are willing to commit. How long are you willing to volunteer (a week? a month? six months?), and how many hours per week can you work during this period?

 Think about how far you can travel. Does the volunteer position need to be close to home? Close to a public transportation route? Or are you able to drive to the position? Also think about transportation as part of the volunteer position. Will you be able to travel as part of the job?

**W**here can you look to find volunteer positions? There is no shortage of opportunities in Calgary. There

are hundreds of non-profit organisations that could use your help. There are several ways you could go about finding these positions:

★ Check out the [Volunteer Bulletin Board](#) - a list of volunteer opportunities on the web provided by CharityVillage, it includes a listing of volunteer opportunities available in Calgary.

★ If you already know a particular organisation which you would like to help out, give them a call and see if they have any need of a volunteer at this time. Some organisations may even allow you to design your own volunteer position.

★ If you have particular skills you want to develop and are not sure who would offer you the chance to develop these, or if you know what type of charity or organisation you would like to work for but don't have anyone specific in mind, head on down to the **Volunteer Centre of Calgary**. They have over 300 agencies whom they work with, and around 1,700 position descriptions on file at any one time. You can schedule an appointment with a referral volunteer who can help you find the position that best suits your needs, or simply browse through their guidebook which contains a short description of all the agencies that are members of the Volunteer Centre. The Centre is located on the 9th floor of 640, 8th Avenue S.W.

★ [City of Calgary Parks](#) Encourages volunteers of all backgrounds, abilities and experience to contact us and see what we have to offer. Opportunities range from a brief, one-time-only two-hour commitment to a weekly commitment on a year-round basis. The program currently boasts 67000 hours annually. All volunteers are screened, receive an orientation, training and various forms of recognition

**Whether** you have chosen the agency yourself or whether it has been suggested to you, it is always a good idea to arrange to tour the agency and speak with people who work there, both paid employees and other volunteers. Make sure you know what the agency does and that you feel that you will be able to fit in with those who work there.

## Using Volunteer Work to Find a Job

If you are planning to use volunteer work to help get paid employment, finding the best volunteer position is only part of the process. There are a few other things you should do to make sure that you get the most out of your volunteer work and help your own career options while helping others.

- Set clear, realistic goals for your volunteer experience. Remember that while you want to help others, you also want to develop specific skills or explore certain careers, and make contacts that can help you in your chosen occupation.
- Interview for your volunteer position as you would for any paid position. Request a "job description."
- Ask about the training opportunities available through the agency you are volunteering with. They may help you get training that you can use in your chosen career.
- Treat your volunteer assignment as seriously as you would any paid job. Attend any training or orientation sessions recommended by the agency. Be punctual, dress appropriately, complete your assigned tasks promptly, and act in a professional manner. Follow the rules and guidelines of the organisation.
- Ask for a periodic review of your work.
- Have your supervisor keep records on your service. This can be used later when you apply for paid work by recording your experience, training, and progress in your volunteer work.
- Develop your own portfolio of records: record training that you received, supervisors, letters of reference, addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- One of the most valuable aspects of volunteering is the contacts you can develop. Use all opportunities to create a network of contacts throughout your community that can help you in your job hunting and career planning.
- When you are ready to make the transition to paid work, let others know about it.

**W**hen you prepare resumés and cover letters for your job search, be sure to emphasize your volunteer experience and the skills you developed. Take the time to analyse closely the skills you developed and the training you received while in the volunteer position.

# JOB SEEKING

## Résumés and Cover Letters

Résumés and cover letters are an essential part of your job-hunting tool kit. They are the most common instruments job seekers use to get their foot in the employer's door. No matter what type of initial contact you make with an employer -- whether it is in-person, through the mail, over the phone or via the Internet, you will want to leave the person with some written reminder of who you are and why you are interested in his or her company or business.



1. **S**tart by testing your [résumé IQ](#). What is a résumé? What is the purpose of a résumé?
2. **F**ind out what kind of [information to include](#) in your résumé. Remember, your résumé is a outline of who you are.
3. **N**ow that you know what to put in your résumé, it's time to find out [what to omit](#). Don't make the interviewer wade through pages of information to find the important stuff.
4. **H**ow should you arrange all this information? There are [three basic formats](#). Choose the one that is right for you and tailor it to meet your individual needs.
5. **H**ere are [12 quick tips](#) to keep in mind as you put together your winning résumé.
6. **M**any employers will want [references](#) who can support what you say on your résumé. Now is a good time to decide who to use as a reference.
7. **N**ever send your résumé out without a chaperone. Every résumé you submit should be accompanied by a [cover letter](#).
8. **M**ost cover letters will use a [common format](#). The key is to make sure you personalize the information you stick into the format.
9. **L**ooking for some [more information](#) on writing an effective résumé and cover letter?

## The nextSteps résumé Quiz



Are you a résumé egghead? Or is your understanding of résumés a little more limited? Take our little quiz and see if you are ready to write a winning résumé. Just click on the letter next to the answer that you think is right.

### 1. What is a résumé?

- [A.](#) A written representation of who you are.
- [B.](#) A self-marketing tool.
- [C.](#) A list of ingredients and a set of instructions as to what to do with them.

### 2. What is the purpose of a résumé?

- [A.](#) To get you a job.
- [B.](#) To get you an interview.
- [C.](#) To get you a date.

### 3. What information should you include in your résumé?

- [A.](#) A comprehensive list of your past jobs, education, skills, hobbies, interests and accomplishments.
- [B.](#) A selective list of your education, work experience and skills as they apply to the job you want.
- [C.](#) A list of education, work experience and skills you think you would need for the job you want.

### 4. How many different résumés should you have?

- [A.](#) Just one.
- [B.](#) One résumé for each unique type of job for which you are applying.
- [C.](#) Four.

**5. How long will the typical employer or recruiter spend on each résumé he looks at?**

- A.** Thirty seconds to one minute.
- B.** As long as it takes them to read the entire résumé thoroughly and attentively.
- C.** Until they find a reason to put it down and go on to the next one.

**6. What do you need to know to write a good résumé?**

- A.** Yourself.
- B.** Yourself and the type of work you are applying for.
- C.** Einstein's theory of relativity.

**7. Is it okay to stretch the truth or "pad" your résumé?**

- A.** No.
- B.** Yes.
- C.** Only if you are applying to work for the government.

**8. What is the best way to organize information in a résumé?**

- A.** Chronologically.
- B.** Alphabetically.
- C.** By always making what the reader is processing the next best thing about you.

**9. Should you include an "interests" area on your résumé?**

- A.** Yes.
- B.** No.
- C.** Only if you actually have interests.

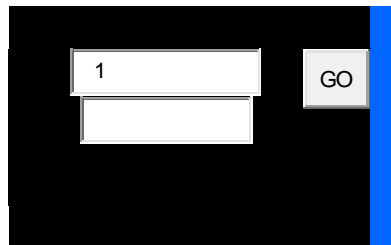
**10. What should you always send along with your résumé?**

- A.** A cover letter.
- B.** A picture of yourself.
- C.** A large wad of bills, preferably tens and twenties.

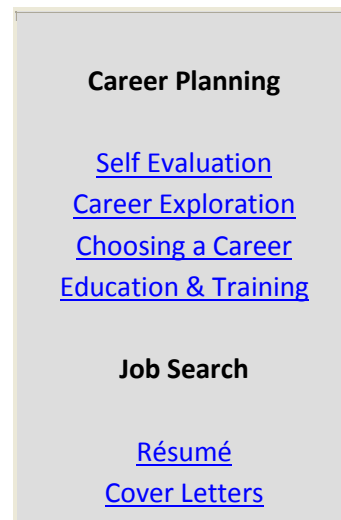
## What to include in your résumé

Your résumé is a picture of who you are. But it is a *selective* picture. It's more like an outline than a full autobiography. It gives the person who reads it a quick, general idea of who you are, leaving out what is unimportant and letting you fill in the details in your job interview.

Below you will find a sample résumé which includes all of the main sections of a winning résumé. Just click on the section you would like to know more about, or scroll past the résumé and read the information on each of the sections in order.



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[Job Search](#)  
[Interviews](#)

**Career Maintenance**

[Keeping Your Job](#)  
[Leaving Your Job](#)  
[Seeking A Raise](#)





**JOHN DOE**  
**#201, 315 - 10 Avenue S.E.**  
**Calgary, Alberta T2G 0W2**  
**(403) 555-1234**

**OBJECTIVE:** To obtain a position in landscaping

**RELATED SKILLS**

- Possess mechanical aptitude
- Able to use a variety of power equipment
- General knowledge of home and garden maintenance
- Three years experience maintaining neighbours' lawns and gardens
- Class 5 driver's license

**PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES**

- Excellent team worker
- Enjoy working outside
- Good physical condition, strong back
- Reliable, punctual, honest

**EDUCATION**

Grade 11  
1993

Central High School  
Calgary, Alberta

- Shops: construction, drafting, horticulture
- Plan to obtain high school diploma through evening courses

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Warehouse Clerk**  
June 1996 - Present

**Storage Plus**  
Calgary, Alberta

**Gas Attendant**  
March 1995 - March 1996

**Lucky Gas Bar**  
Calgary, Alberta

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Enjoy various team sports
- Speak French fluently

**REFERENCES:**

- References and letters of recommendation available upon request

**PERSONAL DATA**

**Name:** Include your first and last name in full, in capital letters.

Leave out any aliases or the pet nicknames your girlfriend or boyfriend has for you. Would you really want your employer calling you "Sweetums" or "Scarface?"

**Address:** Include your full address. Do not abbreviate street, avenue, or name of province. In general, avoid abbreviations throughout your résumé. You can abbreviate the section of Calgary in which you live (S.E., S.W., N.W., N.E.).

**Messages:** Include your home phone number and a phone number where messages can be left if you do not have an answering machine.

[Back to the résumé](#)

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#### **JOB GOAL**

**G**ive a brief explanation of your job objective. This lets the employer know exactly what type of work you are looking for and indicates that all the information to follow explains why you are suited for that job objective.

**M**ake sure this goal matches in some way the job for which you are applying. A job objective that says you hope to eventually captain a whaling vessel won't be much help in landing that job with Greenpeace you are applying for.

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#### **SPECIAL SKILLS**

**I**nclude all the special skills and abilities you have. List first those that relate to the specific job for which you are applying. Try to relate all your skills to your job objective as much as possible.

**U**se action words to describe your skills. Also, make sure you use [words](#) with some "zip" that explain your skills (or the work you did under your employment section).

**H**aving trouble identifying all the skills you possess? You probably have more

than you think. Even if you have never worked at a job like the one you are now applying for, you might still have some of the skills you need. For some help in coming up with ideas, check out our section on [identifying your skills](#).

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## EDUCATION

List schools attended, the type of program, areas of concentration and years of completion. List your education in reverse chronological order. Include all awards, certificates, diplomas and degrees that you received.

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## WORK HISTORY

Supply company name, city and province and dates of employment for each past job, listing these from most to least recent. The résumé format you choose will determine further job information to include.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Use this section to your advantage. Include such things as languages spoken, special seminars taken, etc. Extra-curricular activities and volunteer work are also good indicators of your worth.

You may want to make separate sections with [different headings](#) if there is a lot of additional information you want to include. The point is to get anything in your résumé that explains why you are the right person for the job.

Of course, there is such a thing as information overload. Your ability to sing "Oh Canada" while gargling with mouthwash may be considered a special skill, but it is one you will probably want to leave off your résumé.

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## REFERENCES

**Do** not include references in your résumé unless you are explicitly requested to do so by the employer.

**Do** have several people you will be able to use as references, and keep the necessary information on a separate sheet of paper to take along with you to the job interview. For more information on references, [click here](#).

## What to leave out of your résumé

**Remember**, your résumé is an outline of yourself, not an in-depth autobiography. While there are certain elements which a good résumé should include, there is also a lot of stuff that all good résumés will leave out.

**This** doesn't mean you are being dishonest in any way. It just means that you are only including information that is relevant to the position for which you are applying and leaving out information that the employer either doesn't want to know or doesn't need to know.

**The** following is recommended as information **NOT** to be included in your résumé:

**★ Irrelevant information.** While you don't want to leave anything out that the employer might find significant, including too much information can also reduce your chances of getting an interview. The employer is going to get lots of résumés and will want to be able to go through them quickly. Your résumé should only highlight the skills and education or training you need for the job; you can expand on these and your other attributes in the interview.



★ **Salary** - Past or desired. You can discuss this after you are offered the job, or at the interview if the employer asks you to state your salary expectations. If a specific job posting asks you to include an expected salary, the place to mention it is in your cover letter.

★ **Why** you want to change employment or the reason(s) for leaving previous jobs. If there is a problem that you think must be brought to the employer's attention, this can be done at the interview stage.

★ **Social Insurance Number** - Prospective employers do not need this information. If the employer asks for your S.I.N., or it is requested on an application form, state that you will provide it once the employer has decided to hire you.

★ **Addresses of Previous Employers** - A current phone number is sufficient if using a previous employer as a reference.

The Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act outlines what constitutes discrimination in the area of job applications, advertisements and employment practices. Alberta Community Development has put together a list of [suitable pre-employment inquiries](#). The following are areas of information that employers cannot ask for in employment application forms and in interview situations, and are points you may want to leave out of your résumé:

- Photograph
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Previous name
- Dependents
- Date of birth and age
- Physical information, including height, weight, general state of your health (employers can ask for a job-related medical examination prior to an offer of employment)
- Religious beliefs
- Racial origin

## Three basic formats for a résumé

Now that you know what information to put in your résumé and what to leave out, your next decision will be how to arrange everything.

There are three main ways to organize your information in a résumé. Which is the best one? That all depends. Check out each format below and see which one best suits your situation.

### CHRONOLOGICAL

The chronological format is probably the most popular résumé format (but not necessarily the best one for you).

A chronological résumé highlights your job history and your formal education. Employment and education information is listed in reverse chronological order, with your most recent job or most recent schooling first and working back through the years. The job titles and educational degrees are emphasized and job descriptions, duties and accomplishments are highlighted.

Use a chronological résumé when:

1. You want to find a job in the same area as your previous jobs.
2. Your job history and/or education shows growth and development.
3. The name of previous employer is an important consideration.
4. Prior job titles are impressive.

Don't use a chronological résumé if:

1. You want to emphasize skills that haven't been used in recent work experience.
2. You are looking for a job in an area you haven't worked before.
3. You've changed employers frequently in the past.
4. You are looking for your first job.



[Sample Chronological résumé](#)

### FUNCTIONAL

A functional résumé is organized around the skills, talents and abilities you have rather than around your previous education or employment history. The functional résumé is best when you have little or no actual work experience in the area in which you are now looking for a job.

Specific dates are not as important as they are in the chronological format. What you have done and what you can do are more important than when you did any particular job.

Use a functional résumé when:

1. You haven't worked before or are a new graduate entering your chosen career field.
2. You are applying for a job you have never done before or a job you have done many times but for different companies.
3. You want to emphasize skills you haven't used on a particular job.
4. You have had a variety of jobs in the past which are relatively unconnected.

Don't use a functional résumé when:

1. You want to emphasize a growth pattern in the work you have done or in your education.
2. Your past employers are important in relation to your job objective.
3. Your most recent employers have been highly prestigious.



[Sample Functional résumé](#)

## COMBINATION

The combination résumé uses features of both the chronological and functional résumés. It features a functional section that highlights skills, accomplishments and experience and combines this with a chronological listing of employment and education.

The combination résumé is most effective when both skills and job experience need to be emphasized. Its main disadvantage is that it sometimes leads to a longer résumé, which might turn off prospective employers.

Use the combination résumé format when:

1. You have three or more years experience in a position similar to the one you are applying for, and have substantial skills and accomplishments to emphasize.
2. Your education is an important part of your overall skills presentation and your functional skills are limited.
3. Your work history reflects more time in other occupational areas.



[Sample Combination résumé](#)

## Twelve quick tips for a winning résumé



★ **Type** your résumé on a computer. Use good quality, white or off-white, standard (8.5" x 11") paper. Print only on one side of the page.

★ **Be selective.** Employers will formulate their first impressions from the information you provide.

★ **Be brief and concise.** Ensure that the résumé is easy to read. Remember, employers are probably going to have to go through a pile of these and won't be attracted by long, cluttered résumés that take up a lot of their time. If your résumé is one of the successful ones, you can expand on all your great qualities in the interview.

★ Include lots of **white space** on the page. This makes it easier to read. Use at least one-inch margins. Choose a simple, easy-to-read font at a size that will not strain the reader's eyes (12 point is a good choice).

★ **Don't fold** your résumé. Keep copies in an envelope or folder.

★ Make sure the information is **accurate**. Don't exaggerate or misrepresent yourself. The employers will check! On the other hand, don't sell yourself short either.

★ Make sure you have listed all the **correct personal data**, including your address and a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.

★ Have an **employment counsellor or teacher** help you identify your skills and help with the format. It is always a good idea to have someone else look over your résumé, even if it is just to proofread it.

★ Have at least **three references**. You won't include these in the résumé, but you should have them ready to give the employer if (I mean *when!*) you get an interview. *References can be personal, but academic or work-related ones are preferred.*



★ **Proofread, proofread, and proofread!** Make sure there are no spelling, grammar or typing errors. If employers get a lot of résumés, they will look for any excuse to quickly "pitch" as many of them as possible. Bad proofreading gives them an easy out.

★ **Don't sign or date** your résumé. Do update it regularly and retain past versions for future reference.

★ A **cover letter** should be sent along with the résumé.

## Choosing Your References

The résumé and cover letter are your chance to tell the employer how wonderful you are. And if they impress the employer, you'll get a chance to say even more about all your great qualities at a job interview.

**But** at some point the employer is going to want to find out how other people feel about your abilities and personal qualities. They'll ask you to supply them with a list of **references** to whom they can talk about such things as your past work experience, your education, and your personal traits that would make you the right person for their job.

### What is a reference?

**A** reference is someone who can provide an interviewer or prospective employer with information regarding your strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, you want to give them names of people who will concentrate more on your strengths and less on your weaknesses!

### Who can you use as a reference?

There are three types of references you can use:

1. **Work Reference** - This is usually a person who has been your

#### Career Planning

[Self Evaluation](#)  
[Career Exploration](#)  
[Choosing a Career](#)  
[Education & Training](#)

#### Job Search

[Résumé](#)  
[Cover Letters](#)  
[Job Search](#)  
[Interviews](#)

#### Career Maintenance

[Keeping Your Job](#)  
[Leaving Your Job](#)  
[Seeking A Raise](#)

supervisor. This could be through paid employment or through volunteer work. The more recent your involvement with the employer, the better. An interviewer will question why you are not using previous employers as a reference.

2. **Academic Reference** - This should be a teacher or instructor who has known you for some time. This type of reference is able to provide information about you which could reflect how well you would do on a job.
3. **Personal or Character Reference** - This should be an adult who is able to vouch for your good character and discuss your desirable personality traits.

**E**mployers prefer to see work or academic references if possible. These are people who have seen you work or who have taught you and who know what skills you have, your work or study habits, and how well you can adapt to new situations.

**P**ersonal references should be used only if you are applying for your first job or have very limited work experience.

### **Who should you choose as a reference?**

**N**ow that you know what types of people you can use as reference, how do you choose three or four?

**Y**ou will want to choose those who you feel are best qualified to comment on your abilities, skills, work habits, etc. and who will comment on all these qualities *in a favourable way*.

**O**nce you have chosen the people you want to act as references, *make sure you ask them* if they are willing to do so. Also, ask them if they will provide a **positive** reference!

**I**t's a good idea to keep your references informed about your job search. Give each reference a copy of your résumé so they will be better prepared to receive inquiries from employers.

### **What kind of questions will employers ask a reference?**

**K**nowing what type of questions employers are likely to ask can help you decide who you want to use as a reference. Here are some of the more common questions references are asked.

1. How long did he/she work for you?
2. What was the quality of his/her work?
3. How much responsibility did he/she have?
4. How did he/she get along with people?
5. Did he/she require close supervision?
6. Was he/she prompt?
7. Why did he/she leave your company?
8. Do you know of anything that would disqualify him/her for the job we're considering hiring him/her for?
9. Can you think of anything I should know about him/her that I haven't asked about?

## What information should you provide about your references?

It depends on the type of reference. Appropriate information to provide is as follows:

**Work or Academic References:** Name  
Position or Title  
Company  
City, Province  
Work Telephone (Home number if appropriate)

**Personal References:** Name  
Position or Title  
Company (optional)  
City, Province  
Home Telephone

## What should a list of references look like?

Check out our [sample reference page](#)


## Guidelines To an Effective Cover Letter


The résumé and cover letter are your chance to tell the employer how wonderful you are.


Your letter is your first contact with a potential employer. If it looks attractive, is well written and contains the right information, you will be sure to make a good impression.


The cover letter provides an opportunity for you to personalize your job application. Your résumé will be more generic and will state your qualifications for the job. The cover letter is your chance to explicitly tie these qualifications to the specific duties and responsibilities of the particular job for which you are applying. If you are vague or rambling, the employer won't take the time to move on to your résumé.

The following guidelines apply to all your letters.

 **Address the letter to someone in authority.** Use their name and title. Double check for the correct spelling of their name. When this information is unavailable, the salutation should be Dear Sir: or Dear Madame:.

 **Link yourself to the employer** by naming your referral if possible (eg. John Doe, your personnel manager, suggested I write you). If responding to an ad or a job posting, refer to that.


 Type the letter on good quality 8.5 x 11 inch paper. Keep the letter to **one page** in length and follow a standard business format.


 **Keep the letter interesting** without being too aggressive or humble:

- a. demonstrate that you've done some homework on the company.
- b. convey your enthusiasm and commitment.
- c. balance professionalism with personal warmth and friendliness.


 **Keep the letter organized:**

- a. outline specifically what you are asking and offering (don't mention salary unless asked to do so).
- b. ensure the potential employer knows what action to take - ie. does he/she call you, or will you call him and when?

 **Proofread** your letter before sending it. If you find errors, retype the letter.

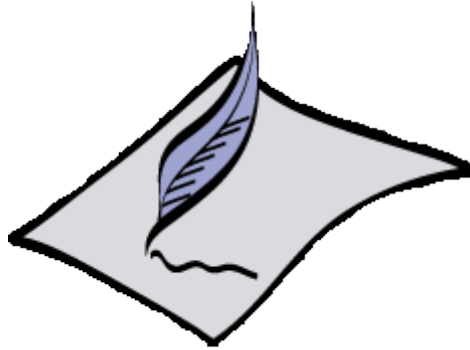
 **Type the address on an 9.5 x 4 inch envelope.** Include a copy of your résumé. Be sure to put your return address on the top left corner of the envelope, and that you have sufficient postage if you are mailing the application.

 **Mail or deliver the hand signed original.** Keep a copy for your files.

 **Ensure you provide sufficient time** for your application to arrive prior to the competition deadline. Don't depend on someone else to mail or deliver the letter for you.

## Cover Letter Format

Most cover letters follow a basic format. Use the example below to customize your information.



Your Name  
Your Address  
Your City, Province, Postal Code

Date of Letter

Employer's Name  
Employer's Title  
Company Name  
Company Address  
Company City, Province, Postal Code

Dear Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. (Name of Employer):

**RE: POSITION YOU ARE APPLYING FOR WITH THE COMPANY**

**Introduction:** Explain why you are writing. Name the position for which you are applying and indicate how you heard of the opening.

**Body of Letter** - Tell the employer what you can do for him/her. This is an opportunity to outline your qualifications and skills as they relate to the job. Use [résumé verbs](#) (e.g. planned, organized, completed) to describe your skills.

When answering an advertisement, be sure to include in the paragraph(s) all the requirements listed in the ad (e.g. academic qualifications, skills, qualities, etc.). This makes the task of matching you to the job easy.

Refer to your attached résumé so that it doesn't get lost in the shuffle.

**Closing** - Use an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview. Provide opportunity for an immediate and favourable response. When using a broadcast letter, enclose a return envelope if you are requesting an application or more information. You may also wish to take the responsibility of contacting them, stating a specific date when you will call. Also, thank them for taking the time to read your letter.

Sincerely yours,

Your signature  
Your Name Typewritten

Enclosure (indicates your résumé is in the envelope with your letter)

## More Information

Looking for some more information on how to write a winning resumé? Interested in posting your resumé online? Need help in creating a scannable resumé?

The Internet is crowded with sites that want to help you find a job, and many of these provide information on how to write a resumé. Check out some of the links listed below.

### [Résumé Tutor](#)

A resumé workbook. Follow the six steps to writing an effective resumé, complete the workbook sections, and you will be given some "points to consider" to improve your resumé. From the University of Minnesota Employment Career Enrichment Program.

### [What is the Right Résumé for Me?](#)

JobStar Central helps you choose a resumé format that fits your job history and target position. Includes a helpful section on the "electronic" or "scannable" resumé.

### [Cover Letter Big Picture](#)

MyFuture.com, gives tips and suggestions on creating an effective cover letter.

## [200 Letters for Job Hunters](#)

One of the few places on the Internet where you can find an entire book online -- and a good one at that! Over 200 different sample cover letters are divided into 20 different sections, such as "Find A Part-Time Job," "Cold Calls," and "Follow Up."

## [The Riley Guide: Résumé Databases on the Internet](#)

The Riley Guide lists over 50 Internet sites where you can post your resumé for employers to check out. Some of are free, others charge a fee. The handy chart tells you vital information for each site, such as whether the database has a particular focus, who can view your resumé, how long it will be retained, what format it will be presented in, and any other important features.

## Job Search

Think finding a job is tough? The next section will provide you with some valuable pointers to an effective job search. Everything from being prepared to knowing who to contact, is covered. Hang on and get ready to learn all the secrets.

## Before You Start

- Are you in a positive state of mind? Complete our [inventory](#) and learn where you are at.
- Staying positive throughout your job search is important. But it is not always easy. Check out our tips on how to stay [out of the dumps](#).
- Job targeting is an essential part of a successful job search. Take aim at your job and [hit the bulls-eye](#).
- The final stage of job search preparation involves [organization](#). Get ready to hit the front lines of the job-searching campaign.

## Job Search Strategies

The traditional method of looking for work involves reading job ads, pounding the pavement and sending out a pile of resúmes. While this is still an option, there are many other alternatives that may be more effective. Just remember, everyone's job search is different. You will want to decide what combination of strategies outlined below suits your personal needs. Using a variety of methods will increase your likelihood of finding employment. Accessing both the advertised and unadvertised job markets is a good place to start.

Followup is an important element of every job search strategy you use. Whether you have mailed a resumé, answered a newspaper ad or made a cold call, contacting the employer again by mail or phone can be very effective.

1. [Advertised jobs](#) tend to be in newspapers and on job boards. Remember, this represents only about 20 per cent of what's out there, so don't stop at this point.
2. Unadvertised positions account for the majority of job opportunities. How can you tap this hidden job market? By becoming a [networking expert](#).
- 3.

We all have a built-in network that we can use to tap the hidden job market, even if we aren't aware of it. Find out how to identify and develop your [personal network](#).



4. The people you already know are only one part of an effective network. There are also people in the job market who can provide leads and referrals. Learn how to establish [job contacts](#).
5. Want to learn more about tapping the hidden job market? Trying to find information about companies to help you in your job search? Just click [here](#) for a list of helpful Internet resources.

## Job Search

### Are You Positively Charged?

Your general outlook on life and approach to the world around you--your attitude--affects everything you do in life. Attitudes tend to lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. Think you will never find a career that is "right" for you? You probably won't. Think that career planning is a great way to learn more about yourself and the hundreds of exciting opportunities that await you in the world of work? You're well on your way to finding a fulfilling career.

### Directions:

1. **Enter your name and click on the update button.**
2. Click on the box beside each question and **choose the number** that most closely represents how you would react.
3. After you have responded to all the questions, click on the **proceed button** at the bottom of the survey.




4.


<input type="text"/>	Am I friendly?	<input type="text"/>	Can I be optimistic when others are disheartened?
<input type="text"/>	Do I refrain from complaining a lot?	<input type="text"/>	Do I have a sense of duty and responsibility?
<input type="text"/>	Do I control my temper?	<input type="text"/>	Do I speak well of my teacher, coach, employer?
<input type="text"/>	Do I feel well most of the time?	<input type="text"/>	Do I follow directions willingly and ask questions when necessary?
<input type="text"/>	Do I keep my promises?	<input type="text"/>	Do I organize my work and keep up with it?
<input type="text"/>	Do I readily admit my mistakes?	<input type="text"/>	Is it easy for me to see the positive qualities in most people?
<input type="text"/>	Can I stick to a tiresome task without being prodded?	<input type="text"/>	Do I realize my weaknesses and attempt to correct them?
<input type="text"/>	Can I take being teased?	<input type="text"/>	Do I avoid feeling sorry for myself?
<input type="text"/>	Am I courteous to others?	<input type="text"/>	Am I neat in my personal appearance and work habits?
<input type="text"/>	Do I respect the opinions of others?	<input type="text"/>	Can I adapt to new and unexpected situations readily?
<input type="text" value="1"/>	Am I tolerant of other people's beliefs?	<input type="text"/>	Do I refrain from sulking when things go differently than I'd like?
<input type="text"/>	Am I a good listener?	<input type="text"/>	Am I the kind of friend I would like others to be?
<input type="text"/>	Can I disagree without being disagreeable?	<input type="text"/>	Am I normally punctual?
<input type="text"/>	Do I consider myself a courteous driver?	<input type="text"/>	Do I generally speak well of others?
<input type="text"/>	Can I take criticism without being resentful or feeling hurt?	<input type="text"/>	Do I generally look at the bright side of things?
<input type="text"/>	Can I work with someone I dislike?	<input type="text"/>	Am I pleasant to others even when I feel displeased about something?
<input type="text"/>	Am I enthusiastic about the interests of others?	<input type="text"/>	Do I tend to be enthusiastic about whatever I do?
<input type="text"/>	Am I honest and sincere with others?		


## Have an Attitude


A successful job search is a matter of attitude. A positive attitude is the *cause* of a successful job search, not the result. It's just common sense that the more negative you are about your own abilities, your job prospects, the companies you apply to work for, and life in general, the less likely you are to land a job. Employers want people who believe in themselves and their skills, who want to work, who want to work for *them*, and who generally have a positive attitude.


While maintaining a positive attitude is vital to a successful job search, there will be times when you get discouraged. It may seem impossible to revive that positive energy level. But there are many things you can do to bring your rosy outlook back to life and keep it in good shape. Think of the following tips as a crash course in CPR: Cheerful Positiveness Resuscitation.


 **Feel good about yourself.** This is the key to a positive attitude, and all the points that follow are ways of helping you feel good about yourself.


 **Talk positively about yourself and your abilities.** You know the story about the little engine that could, right? What you believe about yourself is the foundation of all your future actions.


 **Take charge!** Accept responsibility for your life and your job search. It is not up to your mother, father, girlfriend or boyfriend, or your aunt Zelda in Jasper to find you a job. Although your network can be a definite help, YOU are responsible for the success of your job search.

 **Let go of regrets about the past.** Instead of blaming yourself and constantly rehashing past mistakes, take the opportunity to learn from the past. Build on past experiences to improve yourself and your abilities.


 **Stop worrying about the future.** While you don't want to live in the past, you also don't want to live in the future. Worrying is a habit, and you can change the habit if you really try. If you find yourself stuck in a negativity rut, shovel yourself out by focusing on your hopes and dreams rather than on your fears.


 **Flatter yourself.** The job search is no time to be humble. Read every complimentary thing about yourself that you can find. Letters of praise, past awards, performance appraisals, or any other positive recognitions you have are good ways to remind yourself of your worth and talents. Paste these things on a wall or a bulletin board in your work area to boost your spirits whenever you feel a little down.


 **Start each day on a positive, upbeat note.** The start of your day will set the tempo for everything that follows. Do something every morning that will put you in a good mood, whether that is taking a walk, listening to some upbeat music, doing a crossword, or just relaxing with a good cup of coffee.


 **Get physical!** You've heard the saying, "healthy body, healthy mind." Keeping yourself healthy and in good physical shape will boost your energy level and make it easier to maintain a positive mental attitude.


- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Get enough sleep.


 **Create a schedule and stick to it.** Knowing what you are supposed to do each day can prevent you from feeling lost or bored. Sticking to your schedule as closely as possible will provide focus to your job search.

 **Keep up appearances.** While nobody expects you to wear a suit and tie every day on your job search, try not to dress too casually. Keep your work space and living space neat and tidy as well. Lying around the house in your old sweats with pizza boxes strewn all over the floor may be relaxing, but it won't help you set a positive framework for your job search.

 **Take a team approach to finding a job.** Even if the team is only two people, it is helpful to have somebody else to share ideas with and to review your progress on a regular basis.

 **Accept your cycles.** While it is important to maintain a positive attitude, it's unrealistic to think that you will be 100 per cent positive forever. The trick is not to get down on *yourself* when you get down. Set a time limit on how long (30 minutes, for example) you will allow yourself to stay down when you feel a little depressed.


 **Join a professional group.** If you are looking for a job in a certain profession, joining an association can be an excellent way to keep up to date on developments and trends. It will help you develop your network and put you in contact with people that have interests similar to yours.


 **Keep growing.** Continue to develop your skills and knowledge while looking for work. Do this by:


- Taking a class.
- Attending conferences, workshops and seminars.
- Subscribing to trade magazines.
- Reading the newspaper and other current-affair magazines.


- Doing volunteer work that uses the skills and knowledge you want to use in your next job.

If you are not immediately successful in finding work, you might start to question your skills and qualifications. Keeping on top of the skills, knowledge and trends in your field will make you feel positive about your ability to do the type of work you want to do.


 **Don't take rejections personally.** Very few people land the very first job they apply to or are interviewed for. Your attitude really depends on how you look at things. You can see a job rejection as a personal attack on your abilities or character, or you can see it as an opportunity to grow and learn more about yourself.

 **Order now, don't delay.** Procrastination is a sure way to lower your self-esteem. Nobody actually considers putting things off as a positive trait, do they? The more you delay, the more depressed you will be when you realize all the things you have left to do. On the other hand, doing something every day will make you feel like you are putting in a real effort and you will feel good about yourself.

 **Attitude is contagious.** Surround yourself with supportive, positive people.

 **Reward yourself.** Make sure you take time out to relax after a day of job hunting:

- Go to a movie or rent a video.
- Read a book.
- Take a walk.
- Do anything else that you find enjoyable and relaxing and that will take your mind off job hunting.

 **Talk to someone.** You might feel really burned out, angry or frustrated after a long, unsuccessful job search. Or you might reach a stage where you want to give up looking for work altogether. At this point it might be a good idea to talk to a trained professional, such as a counsellor, psychologist or religious leader, that can help you sort out your feelings.

## Target Your Job

Once you have developed a positive attitude and know how to maintain it, the next step in preparing for the job search is to determine what particular type of work you are looking for.

Job targeting is an essential part of the job search process. It is **not** an option. If you don't take this step before you start looking for work, you will find yourself wasting a lot of energy looking for jobs you aren't qualified for. Or you may end up getting a job that you aren't interested in.

Use the following steps to help bring some focus to your job search.

1. **Look in the mirror!** The first step to targeting specific job areas is to identify what you like and what you have to offer. What would you like to do? What can you do? Where would you like to be in five or 10 years? What are your values?

If you are following the entire career-planning process in our site, you may have done much of this self-assessment already. Now you only need to bring it up to date. If you have not done some type of self-assessment, it might be a good idea to check out our [Discover Yourself](#) section.

2. **Define your job objective.** Use the results of your self-assessment to define a job objective that matches your personality and talents. Do you have the skills to perform the required duties of the occupation you have chosen? Do you meet the training and/or educational requirements of the occupation? If you answered "no" to either of these questions, find out how you can change the answer to a "yes."
3. **Don't be too narrow.** While you want to have a defined job objective, you also want to be open to new ideas, new ways of working, and different career options.

For example, while you want to have a specific type of job in mind when looking through the classified ads, you should still read through all of the ads. You might find an interesting job you hadn't thought of before which requires many of the skills you have or which might in some way fit in with your career goals.

## Organizing Job Search Central

Okay. We've convinced you that a positive attitude is a critical component of a successful job search. You've got that smile pasted on your face and know how to keep it there.

We've also convinced you of the importance of narrowing your search down to one or two particular jobs, while keeping your eyes open for related jobs that might match your skills and interests. You've reviewed what you *can* do and what you *want* to do, and you've stated your job objective. Now you're ready to hit the front lines and start the job search campaign, right?

Almost. Before you put on your marching shoes, there are a few more things you will want to do to make sure you score a decisive victory.

- [Set up Command Control](#)
- [Get Provisions](#)
- [Establish Your Lines of Communication](#)
- [Establish Discipline](#)

### Set up Command Control

Every army needs a headquarters. From here, you will be able to plan strategy for your job-hunting campaign, monitor developments, and devise and modify tactics as the battle progresses. Take a few minutes or hours (or even a day) to set up Command Control. It might seem like a waste of time, but it will save you a lot of unnecessary grief in the long run.



**Give yourself some space.** Find a room or an area in a room that you can devote entirely to your job search. It should be as private and as free from interruptions as possible.



**Organize your space.** Make sure you have plenty of desktop space to organize your materials. Get a comfortable chair--you'll be spending a lot of time in it!



**Keep it clean!** Nothing will make you less enthusiastic about job hunting than a messy, unorganized work space. Keep it neat, and give it a personal touch so that you feel comfortable and "at home" in it.











### Warning:

Clutter is a leading cause of procrastination.







### Get Provisions

Once you have set up Command Control, your next step is to stock up on provisions. You will want to make sure you have supplies to last you throughout your job-hunting campaign. Nothing is worse than getting your résumé and cover letter all ready to mail for that last-minute job application and finding that you are out of staples and paper clips!

What supplies will you need? Here's a start . . .


- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  Phone books   |  Tape                         |  Pens and pencils |
|  Scissors      |  Stapler and staples          |  Paper clips      |
|  Pads of paper |  Envelopes -- different sizes |  Calculator       |
-  If you have a computer or typewriter, make sure you have the necessary supplies to go with it: floppy disks, toner cartridges or typewriter ribbons and good quality paper.


The ability to create documents is essential in the job search process. You will have to be able to print such things as resumés, cover letters, and thank-you notes. That means you will need access to a typewriter or computer. If you don't have one, there are several options:


-  Buy one.
-  Borrow one.
-  Rent one.
-  Check out your local library to see if they have typewriters or computers for public use.
-  Copy centers or similar businesses often have computers or typewriters that can be rented on an hourly basis.
-  Find a service that will produce documents for you. The Calgary Youth Employment Centre provides access to a computer and printer, but also have trained counsellors to help you write up an effective résumé and cover letter. Check out the other [services](#) YEC offers.

### **Establish Your Lines of Communication**

**A** good general will make sure that strong lines of communication are in place before venturing out to do battle. Establish a message center so you don't have to worry about missing important calls when you are "out in the field."

 If anyone else will be answering the phone during your job search--parents siblings, roommates, etc.--inform them of your job search and make sure they will answer the phone in a professional manner.

 Put a pad of paper and a pen or pencil by the phone. Have a bulletin board or some other specific place near the phone to post notes and messages. Make sure that anyone who takes a message writes it down and doesn't rely on their memory.


 If you don't already have an answering machine, you might want to consider getting one. There should always be a way for employers to leave a message if they are trying to contact you. Make sure the message you leave on the answering machine is professional. This is not the time to amuse your callers with your flawless impersonations of Donald Duck or Captain Kirk.


### **Establish Discipline**


**All** successful generals know the importance of establishing discipline among their troops. Since you are the "troops" as well as the general, this means exercising self-discipline.

**Remember, you** are in command of your job search. Nobody will be looking over your shoulder to make sure you follow up on the job lead, or to remind you that tomorrow is the last day you can apply for that job you saw in the paper last week.

**What** can you do to make sure you don't go AWOL from your own job search? Here are a few suggestions:

 Create and keep a regular schedule. You'll find it easy to spend the afternoon watching soap operas or your favorite talk show if you don't have a job-hunting routine. Give yourself something definite to do. Check out our [sample schedule](#) for some ideas.

 Spend as many hours each day looking for work as you would spend working for your employer. This might sound crazy, but if you are willing to spend 40 hours a week slaving away for somebody else, doesn't it make sense to do the same for yourself?

 Develop a budget. This may be hard to do since you can't know for sure how long it will be until you find employment. One approach you can take is to determine your minimum budget. This means figuring out the minimum amount of money you need to



spend on the essentials. You will also want to leave a little leeway for unforeseen expenses that will crop up.

Once you have determined your expenses, the next step is to identify your sources of funds. How much money do you have saved up? What sources of income will you have during your job search period? Is there anything that you can do to make money while you continue to look for work? (Work part-time, babysit, mow lawns, etc.).

## Advertised Jobs

Two common places to locate advertised jobs are the newspaper classified sections and job boards. These can be valuable resources, but since less than 20 per cent of jobs are advertised, your job search shouldn't end here.

Remember too that while it is a lot less work for you to access advertised positions than unadvertised ones, it is also less work for everyone else. That means competition for the few advertised positions will be much greater than for those in the hidden job market.




## Classifieds

The traditional job search meant diving into the classified sections of newspapers. While classified ads can be a valuable source of job leads, they also have drawbacks. Often they leave out a lot of valuable information, such as who the employer is, where the job is located, or what kind of competition you will be up against.


Here are some guidelines that can help you evaluate and respond to newspaper ads.


- ▶ **Avoid delays.** Read the newspaper every day first thing in the morning.
- ▶ **Read every ad.** New ads are printed daily. Some ads may even be misplaced, so read all of the help wanted ads.
- ▶ **Write down ads that interest you.**
- ▶ **Don't be overly cautious about qualifications.** Employers are looking for the ideal candidate. However, job seekers can learn or improve skills through on-the-job training or

experience. If you think you would like the job, ask yourself, "Could I handle this job with a few weeks of experience?" or "Have I done something similar in the past?"

 **Don't skip over the ads that have little information.** Job seekers should assume the best about a listing and follow up, even if the ad supplies little information. For example, employers often leave out information about salary, hours of work and duties, because these are negotiable.

 **Beware of ads that appear too good to be true.** They probably are.

 **Analyze the ad.** Does the position have a high turnover rate? This may be the reason for the employer using the classifieds.

 **Tailor your resumé and cover letter.** List your specific skills as they relate to the announcement. Only include references if they are requested.

## **Job Boards**

Job boards are becoming more and more common. The trick is to know where to find them. Human Resources Development Canada offers a computerized job listing that can be accessed at their centres and on the [Internet](#). Employment agencies, schools and companies, to name a few, often have job boards that are open to the public. In your job search you will want to target the job boards that are going to be most relevant to you.





A new and comprehensive source of job listings is the Internet. It can provide access to many different online job boards from companies around the corner to around the world. Where can you find these? Check out [Jobsville!](#)

## **Become a Networking Expert**







What exactly does networking mean? It is an organized way to link contacts together to form a "net" of people who can give you support and information. It is important to contact both people that you already know and those you should know. Spreading the word that you are looking for work increases your chances of hearing about unadvertised positions. Ask people for advice, information and referrals. There is no limit to the number of people you contact--the more the better!

Think about it. As an employer, would you rather go through the entire hiring process, or simply have an applicant recommended to you? You could save time and energy by drawing on contacts for referrals. This same process can be used in your job search.

### **What can networking do for you?**

-  Increase the number of people who are aware of your job search.
-  Help you gain information on an occupation.
-  Provide information and knowledge on labour market trends.
-  Help you to develop contacts, your personal network.

### **Networking Tips**

-  Tell everyone you know that you are looking for work.
-  Make your information specific. For example, let them know the type of work you are looking for. Contacts will find it a lot easier to help you if they have more specific information.
-  Be considerate. Don't take up too much of your contact's time or expect him or her to bend over backwards for you.
-  Be professional and willing to accept advice. Your reason for contacting them is to gather information, so listen.
-  Ask for referrals. If the person you contact cannot help you, try and get the name of someone who can.
-  **Don't give up!**

## Create your Personal Network

Identifying your personal network is very important. The point is to get as many people as possible helping you in your job hunting. We've provided a handy chart to help you put together a list of all the people you know who can help out. Print off the chart and put down the names of the people you know in each category.

<b>People</b>	<b>Names</b>
---------------	--------------

Spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend	
-------------------------------	--

Parents	
---------	--

Brothers and sisters	
----------------------	--

Uncles and aunts	
------------------	--

Cousins	
---------	--

Neighbours	
------------	--

Friends	
---------	--

Friends of friends	
--------------------	--

Classmates	
------------	--

Teachers	
----------	--

Employers	
-----------	--

Former employers	
------------------	--

Supervisors	
-------------	--

Co-workers

Youth group leaders

**Members of:**

- School clubs
- Sports teams
- Church, synagogues
- Service Clubs

## **Establishing Employment Contacts**

**N**ow that your friends and family know you are looking for work, it's time to branch out into the unknown. People in the industry or job you are interested in may be valuable sources of information. But how do you contact people with whom you have no prior ties? The only way is to take the plunge.

1. Making a "cold call" can be a scary proposition. The key to success is [preparation](#).
2. Now that you are ready to begin establishing job contacts, the [telephone cold call](#) is a good place to start.
3. The next step is to meet your contact in person. Check out our tips on making the [face-to-face meeting](#) less intimidating.
4. Meeting your contact in person is the ideal. But it is not always possible. A [letter](#) may be another alternative.

## Preparing For A Cold Call

Although it is becoming more common, cold calling is one of the most daunting tasks of the job search. Cold calling means contacting people with whom you have not had any previous contact. It can take many different forms, from a phone call to actually completing an [informational interview](#). The key to cold calling is to be prepared for anything. At any point in the process, you could find yourself dealing directly with the person who is responsible for hiring. You must always be ready to sell yourself and your skills.

### Sources for Cold Calls

Using your established [personal network](#) is one place to begin your cold calls. Often the more important and more difficult calls are the ones to new contacts and employers. One way to find new people is to use directories. The yellow pages are the easiest of these to access. From there you may want to visit your local library or employment centre to use their business directories. Not only will you get the company name, but often you may get the address, phone number and contact person. This information will be very useful when you are ready to begin your cold calling.

### Personal Introductions, "Spiels"

To ensure you're not left speechless, take the time to create a personal spiel. A personal spiel is a verbal introduction to the employer, which markets your skills and abilities. There are five things to remember when giving your spiel to an employer:

- 1** Introduce yourself.
- 2** Tell them why you are contacting them.
- 3** Tell them three skills you possess that are pertinent to the type of job you are enquiring about.
- 4** Ask if you may send or leave a copy of your resumé.
- 5** Arrange a follow-up contact.

You may have more than one spiel that you refer to depending on the type of job that you are applying for. Read your spiel over and say it aloud several times for practice. It is important that you know it by heart and feel comfortable saying it.

Another alternative is to have your personal spiel neatly laid out on a cue card. This can serve a dual purpose. You can refer to it if necessary or, if it is professionally done, you could leave it with networking contacts or employers as an introduction. A calling card can act as a reason to follow up and potentially reach the decision-making person.

## Telephone Cold Calling

Now that you have done the preparation, you are ready to begin making some cold calls. The telephone cold call is a good place to start. Before you make the call, be sure you have everything you need to be successful:

- [Job search tracking sheet](#)
- Pen and paper
- Calendar/personal agenda
- [Personal spiel](#)
- Complete résumé
- Confidence




This telephone call will enable you to find out who the contact people in the company are and determine when the best time would be to drop off a résumé. Telephone contacts are an effective way to gather information and expand your network, but it is important to approach them the same way you would a face-to-face meeting.


- [Telephone Tips and Techniques](#)- Some things to keep in mind when using the telephone for job hunting.
- [Cold Calling Scenarios](#)- A handy chart of possible scenarios during a telephone cold call and how to respond to each scenario.


## Telephone Cold Calling - Tips and Techniques


Sometimes people get sloppy when using the telephone. For example, tucking the phone between the shoulder and chin can produce some difficult-to-understand sounds. So can chewing gum or smoking while talking. When you are job hunting, it's back to the basics in telephone technique. After all, the voice at the other end of the line may belong to the same person as the hand that signs your future pay cheques!


Here are some ideas to keep in mind when you are using the telephone for job hunting:


 **Talk to the right person at the right time.** Ensure that you ask for the person who is responsible for hiring. Ideally you should know this person's name so you can ask to speak with him or her directly. In addition, be aware that certain businesses have busy times when they would not appreciate a phone call: for example, 1:00 p.m. at a busy restaurant.


 **Keep control in your hands.** If the person you want is not in when you call, never leave a number and wait for your call to be returned. Ask what is the best time to call the person and say that you will call back later.


 **Speak with authority.** Make sure your call sounds like it demands attention.

 **Identify yourself.** Don't assume the person you are calling will recognize your voice or that the secretary has passed on your name. If you have been referred by someone else, mention their name.

 **Smile.** It works the same as it does face to face. A smile can be heard over the phone. Not only does it make you sound friendlier, it also guarantees that your requests will not sound like demands and questions won't sound like criticisms.

 **Have a good voice.** Speak loud and clear enough. Don't mumble or shout. Also, don't talk too fast, too slow or with your mouth full. Be friendly and precise.

 **Get to the point.** Get down to business as soon as you can, and be brief. Say only what needs to be said.

 **Listen to the other person.** A phone conversation is a two way thing. Sure, you called for a purpose, but remember you want to motivate your listener to take favourable action on your behalf. So listen when they want to talk. Even better, take notes on what is said and do your best



to answer. If you can't provide answers off the top of your head, tell them you'll get the answers and call them back. THEN DO IT!

▶ **Ask for a meeting (interview) at a definite time.** Do this as lightly as possible. Use the "alternative of choice" technique. For example: "Would Thursday afternoon or Friday morning be more suitable for you, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_?" Try to eliminate any 'need' from your voice. If the employer indicates there are no positions available, ask for a meeting anyway.

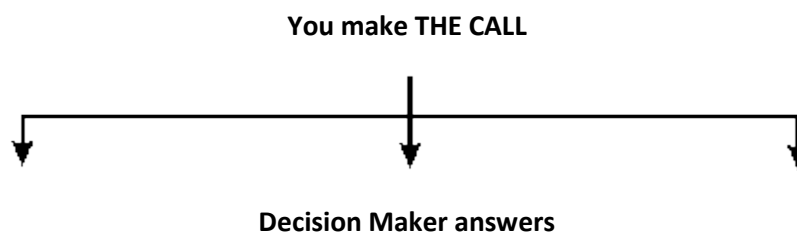
▶ **Write yourself a memo.** Write brief notes while on the phone to record what you said and what your contact said. Don't rely solely on your memory. Transfer this information, along with the date, time of call and the name, address and phone number of the person with whom you spoke, to your job tracking sheet once you have completed the call.

▶ **Use the "callback" ending.** Ask if you may call back in a couple of weeks to see if any opportunities have opened. If you make the initial phone call, and immediately find yourself talking to the person responsible for hiring, be prepared with your personal spiel.

▶ **Follow up as required.** Promptly! Send any requested material, get any relevant answers you need, or acknowledge any important details.

Now that you know how to make an effective phone call, it is important to imagine some of the outcomes that might result. There is no limit to the responses you may come across, so check out this [cold calling scenario](#) for some of the possibilities.

## Cold Calling Scenario



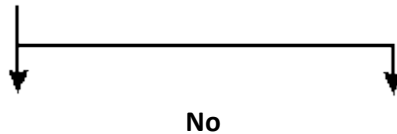
- Move on to [talking to the decision maker](#).

### Assistant answers

- Ask for the name of the decision maker, if you don't already know it.
- Ask to speak to the decision maker.

### Voice mail

- Hang up.
- It is important to keep some control in your job search. If you leave a message you will lose that control.



- Explain your reason for calling and enquire about a convenient time to deliver your resumé.

### Transferred to correct person

- Move on to [talking to the decision maker](#).



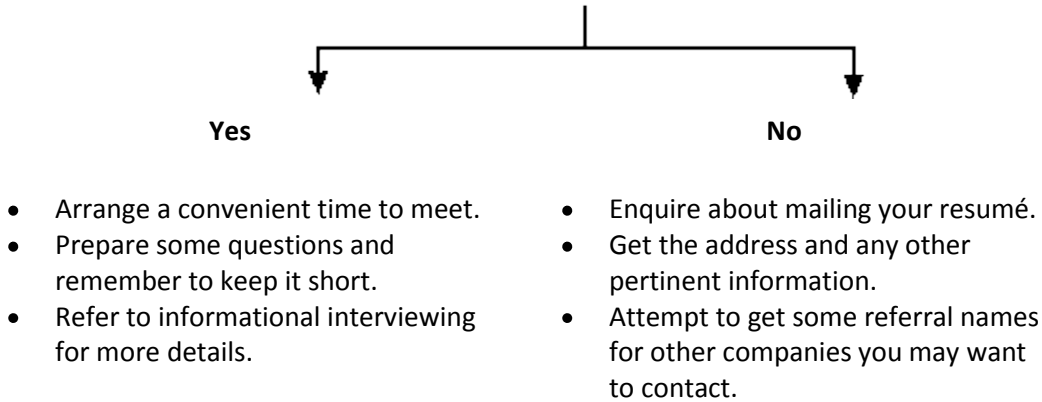
- Deliver your resumé.
- Be prepared to see the decision maker and present your personal spiel.
- If the person you need to see is busy, leave your resumé with the front line staff.

### No

- Get the name of the decision maker and the full address of the business so that you can mail in a resumé.

### You're talking to the Decision Maker

- Introduce yourself and deliver your personal spiel.
- Request five minutes of their time so that you can deliver your resumé in person.



## Face-to-Face Cold Calling

Going in person to meet the individual is the next step. At this stage you may simply be dropping off your resumé, but this is the minimum amount of contact you want to make. Ideally, you would meet with the hiring individual, deliver your personal spiel and leave your resumé. At any point, if it is appropriate to request an informational interview, don't hesitate!



Contacting employers in person can be intimidating. Here are several tips to help you through this process:

**1 Dress appropriately.** Make sure you wear clean and pressed clothing, and take care with your personal hygiene. Remember to wear anti-perspirant, shave, have clean hair, and avoid trendy makeup or jewellery.

**2 Smile and maintain eye contact.** It will do wonders for your appearance and will make the employer feel comfortable with you.

**3 Comfortable handshake.** Upon introducing yourself to the employer, shake their hand in a grip that is not too limp but not like a vice.

**4 Bring a pen and notebook.** You may need to fill out application forms. Write down names of people you speak with, and the person in charge of hiring. You should also write down when and where your contacts were made and when you should call back.


**5 Bring your resumé.** Carry at least 10 copies of your resumé with you when making "cold" employer contacts.


## Networking Letters

Networking letters may be used in several situations. If you are unable to make contact with an employer in person or on the phone, a networking letter may be an option. Remember, meeting a potential employer face to face is the ideal situation. A face is harder for an employer to forget than a piece of paper.


Networking letters may also be used to follow up your initial phone or interview contact. It may be a way of reinforcing your qualifications and thanking the employer for their time. Either way, this letter is a written record of your contact with them.


### Tips for Effective Networking Letters


 Be brief and mention your conversation or visit.

 Elaborate on your job or career interests.

 Provide specific information about your education and experience as it relates to the contact.

 Make note of the specific assistance that your contact provided and mention any additional action you would like them to take.

 State any actions you plan to take.

 Inform the contact that you will keep them up to date.

 Be professional yet friendly.

 Mention your commitment to make a follow up call.

## **Internet Resources**

**W**ant to find more information on how to improve your job search skills? There are a lot of good resources on the Internet that can help you out, whether you are looking for more instruction on how to tap the hidden job market or trying to research the companies that provide job opportunities in your chosen field.

### **[Hidden Job Market](#)**

This site explains what is meant by the hidden job market, gives a step-by-step plan for finding jobs that aren't advertised, describes how to get "insider information" for your job search, and provides an excellent list of resources available on the Internet to research companies. From JobStar Central: California Job Search Guide.

### **[Job Search Series Brochures](#)**

This site, from the University of North Dakota's Career Services, provides 16 brochures that cover many of the important components for building a successful job search strategy.

## **Finding Company Information**

Company information can be a big help when trying to tap into the hidden job market. Perhaps you have an idea what companies you would like to work for and want to find out more information about them. Or perhaps you have an idea what type of work you are looking for and want to find out the name of some companies in the field.

Information about companies can also be helpful once you land an interview with a company. Show prospective employers that you know a little bit about the company and watch them stand up and take notice.

### **[Researching Companies](#)**

Another very helpful section from the librarians at JobStar Central.

### **[Yahoo: Business and Economy: Companies](#)**

One great way to find out information on companies is to check out their homepage. Yahoo provides links to thousands of company homepages on the Web.

### [Canada NewsWire](#)

Press releases can be a great way to find out what particular companies have been up to recently (although they will of course present this information in the best light possible). Canada NewsWire is a great source for press releases and news releases. The best way to find releases on a particular company is to use the [search by organization](#) option, available on the front page of the Web site.

### [Marketwire](#)

Another valuable resource for company press releases.

### [The Blue Book of Canadian Business](#)

This annual publication of Canada's top performing companies now has an Internet site. While it costs money to see their complete list of company profiles, they do have a list of some major Canadian corporations for whom they provide extensive information as well as links to the corporation's homepage, if available.

### [YellowPages.ca](#)

Online Yellow Pages for Alberta from Telus. Very bare-bones information about companies (name, address, and phone number).

Another great way to find information about a particular company is to use an Internet-wide search engine, such as [Yahoo](#), or [Google](#). More and more companies are establishing a presence on the Internet by developing their own Web sites. These Web sites often offer great information about the company and the product or services they offer.

## **Interviews!**

You're moving right along. You've found the perfect job, you've sent in a truly outstanding resumé and cover letter (if you do say so yourself), and all your hard work has finally paid off -- you have been called in for an interview.

You know you are the best candidate for the position... now you just have to convince the employer. It's a great opportunity and if you do well in the interview, the job could soon be yours.

[Preparing for the Interview](#) - Success largely depends on what you do before the interviewer even asks the first question.



[Common Interview Questions](#) - Why do interviewers always seem to ask such strange or irrelevant questions? Take a look at some common interview questions and find out. We'll also suggest some ways to respond.

[Stages of the Interview](#) - There are three different stages to the job interview. Knowing how to react at each stage can help the entire process go smoothly.

[After the Interview](#) - You're not done yet! There's just a few more things to be done . . .

[More Information](#) - Want to practice some more interview questions? Need some tips for a telephone interview? Or just looking for the lighter side of the job interview? Check out the links and resources here.

## **Prepare Yourself**

Preparation is a big part of the interview process. You will -- or should! -- spend more time getting ready than you will at the interview itself.

This preparation includes both getting to know more about the company and the position, and preparing yourself to explain how your assets make you the best person for the position. And of course there's the time it takes to make yourself presentable!

Start with some [general steps](#) to consider as you prepare for the interview.

[Knowing the job](#) and the company you are applying to will help you impress your interviewers.

[What you wear](#) to the interview can be as important as what you say.

Don't go to the interview [empty-handed](#). But don't take the kitchen sink (or fridge) either.

The interview starts when you [walk in the door](#). Be sure to make a good first impression.

## General Tips

Going to a job interview can be a stressful situation for many. The best way to help relieve this stress is to maintain a positive attitude and **be prepared**. Here are 10 things you can do to make your job interview a successful one and as stress-free as possible:

- 1** Be positive
- 2** Be ready for the questions you will likely be asked. Think of the answers you want to give.
- 3** Know why you want to work for the firm. Do your best to obtain information about the company before the interview.
- 4** Know about the job. What likely duties and responsibilities will go with the position?
- 5** Know what you have to offer -- what training you have had and what you have done that make you ideal for this position.
- 6** Be prepared to give names, addresses and phone numbers of references.
- 7** Have your resumé up to date and take it with you.
- 8** Make sure you can get there on time. Know where you are going and how long it will take you to get there. Go there once before your interview if possible so you are sure of the route.
- 9** Allow at least one hour for the interview. Don't make any appointments for right after the interview.
- 10** Get enough sleep. Be clean and neat. Prepare your clothes the night before.










## Preparation - Know the Job

One of the most important things you can do before your job interview is to find out some information about the company and the particular position for which you are applying.


If you can show the interviewers that you have "done your homework," they will assume that you would show the same kind of dedication and initiative if you were to work for them.


Of course, you don't want to be blatant about the research you have done. Only use the information you find out about the company when it fits into the conversation you are having-- don't stick it in just to impress the employer.


**What kind of information should you try to find? Here are some suggestions:**


-  What is the business of the employer?
-  What is the nature of the job you are applying for? (possible duties and responsibilities)
-  What are the qualifications for the position? What skills might the employer be looking for?
-  Who are the customers of the business?
-  What is the reputation of the employer?
-  What are the physical requirements for the job?
-  Who will be interviewing you? How many?

So you know what kind of information to look for. Now where do you find it?

 **Use** the occupational profiles and other resources available at the Youth Employment Centre, or at other employment centres or libraries, to discover information about the specific job you are being interviewed for. What are the basic duties and desired qualifications for the job?

 **Speak** to a person who works at the business: either someone you might know that works there, or someone you don't know. What can they tell you about the business, the employer, and the position?

 **Visit** the business and observe the environment. Sample their products or merchandise. (Have lunch at the restaurant, shop at the grocery store, etc.) Being familiar with the physical layout and atmosphere of the business will also make you feel more comfortable in the actual interview.


 **Research** the employer at the public library. Business directories, annual reports, articles and other relevant information may be available there. The Internet is also a great source for company information. Check out our section on finding [company information online](#).


## Dressing for the Interview


What you wear to an interview can be as important as what you say.

Clothes may not make the man or woman, but they do say a lot about who you are and how well you will fit into the company. Showing up in a kilt or lederhosen may help relieve your tension, but it's unlikely the interviewer will share your sense of humour.


## Tips for all interviewees


 Always wear clean and neat clothing; make sure it is pressed. Nothing will turn an interviewer off more than an outfit that looks like it's been sitting in your laundry hamper since your last job interview.

 Wear deodorant or antiperspirant. 'Nuff said?


 Use little or no perfume or cologne. You want to smell good, but not overpowering. Also, more and more people find they are allergic to perfumes and colognes. You don't want to make the interviewer break out in a rash!


 Have fresh breath and clean teeth.


 Have clean, recently cut, and neatly brushed hair.

 If possible, before your interview find out how people dress at the place of employment. Dress as well or a little better ("one up"). But be careful, as overdressing may also turn the interviewer off.


### **Tips for Men**


 For business, public contact and customer service positions, wear a suit jacket, dress pants, shirt and tie, socks and polished shoes. Avoid loud colours.

 For positions with less public contact, wear a sports jacket or a sweater, a shirt with a collar, dress pants (skip the jeans or sweat pants), and polished shoes.


 Facial hair should be clean-shaven or neatly-trimmed.


### **Tips for Women**

 Go easy on makeup and fingernail polish -- avoid unusual colours, too heavy an application and extremely long nails.

 Simple clothes and quiet colours are most suitable.

 Very tight clothes, see-through tops and short skirts should be avoided.

 Nylons and low-heeled shoes are best for professional, office, sales, public contact and customer service jobs.

 Clothing and accessories do not have to be expensive to make a good impression, but they should always be in good taste and clean. They should also be toned down rather than wild or extravagant. You want the interviewer's attention to be focused on you, not on your clothes.

## What to Take to the Interview

There are some essential things you will want to take along with you when you go for a job interview. For example, it's just common sense to take a pen and paper with you in case you have to write something down.

But you don't want to take too much along either. The interviewer won't be impressed if you have to rummage through a backpack full of junk for 10 minutes to find that pen and paper. The fewer things you have to set down or move around, the better.

The best advice is to carry with you a small folder that contains:

▶ Copies of your resumé, to give to the interviewer at the start of the interview and for your own reference during the interview;

▶ Copies of letters of recommendation, and a typed reference sheet to be given to the interviewer;

▶ Other material relevant to the interview;


▶ Pen and paper, so that you can note the name of the interviewer, times for future interviews and other pertinent information.


## Arriving at the Interview

Remember, your interview really begins as soon as you arrive at the place of the interview, or even before. Who knows, the person you are sitting beside on the bus on the way to the interview might work for the company!


Maintaining a professional attitude even as you leave your house will not only help prevent any potentially embarrassing moments before you get to the interview, it will also keep you in a good frame of mind. Here are some more tips to keep in mind as you head to the interview.


## When You Get There


 You may be asked to wait for a little while. Keep calm, and take the opportunity to go over your answers to some of the questions you think you might be asked. **Do not** listen to your walkman or take the opportunity to do your own manicure.

 Are there books or pamphlets about the company in the waiting room? If there are, you might want to read through them. You'll look interested and enthusiastic, and it may give you additional background to discuss the company and the job.

## In the Waiting Room

 The opinions of secretaries, receptionists and other employees often influence an interviewer's judgement. A favourable or unfavourable comment by them can be a critical factor in helping the interviewer make a decision. So be friendly, polite and courteous from the moment you walk in the door until the moment you leave.

 Know who you are going to see. Ask for him or her by name.

 Making a good impression in the waiting room is just as important as when the interview begins. You wouldn't light up a cigarette or chew gum during the interview, so don't do it in the waiting room either.

## Some Common Interview Questions

**K**nowing what kind of questions you will be asked at your interview can be a real help. You won't be able to predict every question, but there are some common ones that most interviewers will ask. Some will be related to the job for which you are applying, while others will be more generic.

**B**elow you will find a list of common interview questions, along with explanations of why interviewers ask them and what type of response you should provide.

**R**emember as you prepare your answers that an important part of the interview process is the subjective opinion of you the interviewer develops. Be yourself in the interview--don't memorize responses word for word before you go into the interview. Answer the questions honestly, and maintain a relaxed, positive attitude throughout.

## How to Use the Questions

1. **Read the question.** Think about why the employer would ask the question and how you would answer it.
2. **Read the explanation** below the question. Did your expectations and answers match?
3. **Read the question and explanation again.**
4. **Practice giving answers** which provide information that match the employer's expectations. Give specific examples when appropriate.
5. **Practice the questions with someone else.** Have them give you feedback on the answers and on other things such as your body language, or any odd mannerisms you might have.
6. **Videotape yourself.** This can be a great way to find out how you look to others and how well you answer the different questions.

## The Questions

[A. Openers](#)

[B. Work Experience/Job Performance](#)

[C. Education/Training/Future Goals](#)

[D. Company Research](#)

[E. Personal](#)

[F. Closures](#)

### A. Openers

#### *1. Tell me about yourself...*

The interviewer is asking you to tell them about yourself as a person, not merely about your job skills.

Take your cues from the interviewer as to how formal or informal you should be.

- a. Try to provide information that may indicate something you have in common with the interviewer.
- b. Describe a few personal items, such as hobbies or interests.
- c. Mention work-related factors such as previous work experience, training and education.

Mentioning these topics will help create a friendly atmosphere and put you and the interviewer at ease with each other.

[\[Back to question categories\]](#)

### B. Work Experience/Job Performance

#### *1. Have you ever done this type of work before?*

The interviewer is trying to determine if you are qualified for the job.

If you have completed similar work in the past or have held a job using some of the required skills, examples of skills used in past jobs should be described. If this line of work is new to you and you have never done anything similar in the past, be sure to mention your eagerness and ability to learn.

***2. Why should we hire you instead of someone else? What are your greatest strengths?***

When answering this question, remember to keep the information related to the job you are competing for. Mention positive traits that give the interviewer a variety of information about you. Confidently list your skills and your positive characteristics.

***3. What are your weaknesses?***

A tough question. Everyone has weaknesses, but the interviewer wants to know if you have any weaknesses that will prevent you from doing the particular job well.

Don't mention weaknesses if they will not interfere with your ability to do the job. If you do have a weakness that will interfere with the job, then perhaps this is not the best position to be applying for. If you feel you can overcome the weaknesses, mention them to the interviewer and explain what you have been doing to overcome the difficulties. Always reassure the employer that you are confident that you can either work with or overcome the weakness.

***4. What kinds of machines/equipment have you worked with.***

Only mention machines or equipment that are related to the job in question. The more equipment you can operate, the more apparent it is that you are capable of learning about other types that might be used on the job. If you have not had experience working with the type of equipment used, describe similar equipment and express your confidence that you can learn quickly.

***5. Give me an example of a time when you worked under pressure.***

Employers want to know how you are able to handle pressure.

Give the interviewer examples of paid or unpaid activities that involved deadlines and pressures and be able to explain how you handled the stress. If you were unable to meet the deadline, explain what you did to compensate, such as working overtime, renegotiating the deadline, etc.

***6. Why have all your jobs been short term?***

The interviewer is trying to find out if you can keep a job.

You should mention any straight forward factors that are responsible for your work history, such as returning to school, summer or temporary employment, travel, etc. If you have no explanation

to offer the employer, mention that you were looking for work and assure the employer you plan to stay with this job for some time.

*7. Why did you leave your last job?*

The interviewer is looking to see if there were problems at your last job that may arise again.

Employees usually leave a job for more than one reason and you should mention only those reasons that are favourable to you. If you were fired from your last job and feel you need to mention the position on your resumé, explain what happened in a positive manner and note that the situation would never occur again. Do not say anything negative about a company or supervisor you used to work for as the interviewer will most likely view you as someone who will do the same thing again.

[\[Back to question categories\]](#)

## **C. Education/Training/Future Goals**

*1. Why aren't you in school/Why haven't you finished school?*

The interviewer may fear that you will leave your job for the same reasons you left school. He/she may also be curious about any ambitions you have to complete your education.

Tell the employer in a positive way why you are not attending school at present. If you do plan to complete high school, let the employer know this.

*2. What are your long range goals?*

The interviewer wants to know whether you are serious about staying with the company and to determine whether you have given some thought to your future.

If your goals are related to the job in question, be certain to make note of this. If the position is not related to your goals, mention the advantages of gaining additional work experience as part of your career planning.

[\[Back to question categories\]](#)

## **D. Company Research**

*1. Why do you want to work here?*



The interviewer wants to learn what you know about the company and the job for which you are being interviewed. Knowledge about the company and the job shows the interviewer you are interested and demonstrates initiative on your part.

You should mention as many of the positive features as you can about the company and mention why you are a good candidate to fill the job vacancy.

### *2. What kind of salary do you expect?*

Most lines of work have a set salary range and it would be wise to learn what this range is prior to the interview. If you are unable to obtain this information, you may want to tell the interviewer that you would work for whatever the company feels is fair, based on your qualifications and the company's standard salary level for that position. If you want to request a specific salary, be able to back up why you should get that amount (avoid stating personal reasons).

[\[Back to question categories\]](#)

## **E. Personal**

### *1. How much were you absent from work/school?*

The interviewer is trying to determine whether they can depend on you to show for work.

If this has not been an area of concern for you, stress your past reliability and give assurance of your future reliability. If you have had difficulties in this area in the past, tell the interviewer what the reason was and why you feel that it will no longer be a problem. If it will continue to be a problem, be up front about this and try to negotiate a schedule that works for both of you.

### *2. When are you available for work?*

If you are presently unemployed, you can most likely respond that you can begin work right away. However, if you are presently employed, you should be aware of how much notice your present employer requires before you are able to leave your present job. If you are going to school, know when you will be finished and what part-time hours you will be prepared to work before the school year ends.

### *3. Can you explain this gap in your employment?*

The employer may be questioning your commitment to employment, thinking that you don't like to work, or wanting to find out what you have been doing with yourself during the gap.

If you have been doing anything constructive during this time, such as dedicating yourself to school, taking courses, performing volunteer work, etc., mention these. Also, mention that you were looking for jobs, and that you enjoy working.

#### *4. Do you have a criminal record?*

If you have a criminal record, don't try to hide it from the interviewer. Briefly explain the situation, remembering not to sound like you are making excuses or blaming the incident on someone else. Reassure the interviewer that you have learned from your mistakes and have changed your ways.

#### *5. Are you willing to cut your hair/take out your earring?*

The interviewer feels that some aspect of your appearance does not "fit" with the business and wants to know if you are willing to change your appearance.

The decision of what you say is yours. However, if you say no, you may not be considered for the job. Saying yes will increase the chances of being seen as a cooperative person and, consequently, of being hired.

[\[Back to question categories\]](#)

## **F. Closures**

#### *1. Do you have references?*

It is best to provide the interviewer with a neatly typed sheet indicating the name, position, location and telephone number of your references. If you do not have employment references, consider using the names of teachers/instructors or the names of personal references. Personal references should not be the names of friends who are approximately the same age as yourself. Almost all employers will ask for references, so be prepared to provide this information. Also have permission to use someone's name prior to adding it to your reference sheet.

#### *2. Are there any questions that you have?*

This is often the final question that an employer will ask. It is wise to always ask one or two questions as it shows the interviewer your interest in the position available. However, the interview is not the time to ask questions about salary, benefits, hours or vacation. This information may be critical for you in making your decision, but wait until you have been offered the job before asking about them.

## Three Stages to the Job Interview

Now that you have done all the preparation, you're ready for the actual interview. And if you have done your homework, you'll find that the interview process won't be quite as bad as you thought it would be.






One thing that can help you make sure all goes well is to recognize that the interview process will naturally break down into three stages. Knowing what stage of the interview you are in will help you respond to the interviewer in the proper manner.

- 1** The interview begins with the [introduction](#). The first minute or two will often set the tone for the entire interview. It's important to get off on the right foot.
- 2** Most of the interview will involve the [exchange of information](#). Just relax and believe that all your preparation will help you answer any question.
- 3** All interviews will end with a brief [closing](#) phase. No matter how you thought the interview went, make sure you end on a positive note.







## Setting the Scene

The first five minutes often sets the tone for the rest of the job interview. If you can make a good impression and maintain a relaxed attitude from the outset, you'll find the rest of the interview will roll right along.


Here are some suggestions to help you make sure the interview gets off on the right foot.


-  Greet the interviewer. Sounds simple, but many people forget this basic courtesy.
-  Smile. A sincere smile can do a lot to put both of you at ease.
-  Introduce yourself. Don't assume the interviewer already knows your name.
-  Shake hands firmly and warmly.
-  Make eye contact when speaking. On the other hand, don't stare the interviewer down either.


Maintain eye contact in a way that you would with a friend during a casual conversation.

-  Stand until the interviewer asks you to sit down.
-  Relax and sit naturally but do not slump in your chair or lean on the interviewer's desk.
-  Be prepared to make small talk to put both of you at ease.
-  Be prepared to talk about yourself as a person.
-  Speak in a firm, clear, confident voice. You may have great answers to all the interviewer's questions, but that won't matter if your responses are so muffled or timidly expressed that the interviewer can't hear you or doesn't believe you.
-  Maintain a positive attitude throughout the interview.

## What's Next?

 **Practice** your interview skills with someone--a parent, a brother or sister, a friend, a teacher, or a counsellor. Have them give you feedback on how well you perform some of the actions mentioned above. Is your voice clear and understandable? Do you look comfortable? Do you make good eye contact?

 **Videotape** yourself in an interview situation, if you have access to a video recorder. Watching yourself on tape may seem embarrassing, but it can be a great way to find out what you do well and what areas you could improve on. Did you notice any odd habits you have -- fidgeting a lot or a nervous giggle -- that you could work on quitting?

 **Come on down** to the Youth Employment Centre. We provide workshops to help you develop your interview skills and we have trained counsellors who can help you on a one-to-one basis. We also have a video camera onsite, which clients can use along with their counsellors to help improve their interview skills. Learn more about YEC services [here](#).

## Exchanging Information

Now that you have introduced yourself to the interviewer, made some small talk and established a good beginning, you're ready to move on. The exchange of information between you and the employer will make up most of the interview. This is your chance to let the interviewer know

why your personality, education, work experience, and skills make you the best person for the job.

For many of us, the first formal contact with an employer can be a scary experience. If you find yourself a little tense and excited, don't worry--you are not alone. Almost everyone experiences some anxiety and feelings of insecurity during an interview.

Some reminders to help you through the interview process:

**1** Present your resumé. "I've brought my resumé along if you would like to see it."

**2** Be prepared to tell the interviewer more about your:

- education, training, and skills
- desirable personality traits
- work experience

Use specific examples rather than general statements when giving this information.

**3** Look at the interviewer. Do not fidget.

**4** Let the employer have control. Answer questions sincerely and completely. Be aware of natural pauses to ask your questions.

**5** It's okay to ask for clarification if you don't understand a question. It's better to ask the interviewer to restate or explain a question and give a good answer than to try to guess what the interviewer wants and give an inappropriate one.

**6** Don't clam up. For most questions, the interviewer wants more than a simple "yes" or "no."

But don't give long-winded monologues that contain little relevant information, either. An average of one to two minutes for an answer is probably about right.

**7** Don't argue. State your opinions, if asked to do so, but don't press them.

It's okay to have an opinion that is different from that of the interviewer, but make sure you use **tact** when you give your opinion. "I agree, but. . ." or "that's true, but on the other hand. . ." is more effective than "no way," or "that's a silly idea, I think. . ." Independence of thought is okay; rudeness is not.

**8** Don't criticize others, including your former employer.

If you had differences with someone with whom you worked and have to mention these, do it in

a way that is not overly critical. If you show disrespect for your former boss or co-workers, the interviewer may think that it could happen again.

**9** Show interest in the job by asking questions about the company, their product or services, and specific details of the job for which you are applying.

**10** Be aware of why you want this job -- stress your good points.

**11** Keep your personal or financial problems out of the conversation.

The interviewer is interested in how well you can do the job, not in how strapped for cash you are at the moment, or about the fight you had last night with your friend.

**12** Don't chew gum or smoke. It's just a basic common courtesy.


## Closing the Interview


You are almost done the interview. Everything has gone well, you've answered the interviewer's questions well, and you actually felt pretty comfortable throughout the whole thing.


Or maybe you feel that things didn't go that well, and you've got this sinking feeling that you won't get the job.




Whichever is the case, make sure you leave the interview on a positive note. Many people have left an interview feeling they blew it, only to be surprised by a phone call from the employer a few days later offering them the job. You can never be sure what the other person thought of the interview, so it's a good idea to take every opportunity to leave a positive impression.

Here are a few suggestions of things to do as you leave the interview:

 If the employer asks you to call or return for another interview, make a written note as to date, time and place.

 If the employer does not let you know when a further contact will be made, ask when you may call to learn of his/her decision.




 Thank the interviewer for the interview and his/her time.

-  Shake hands when you leave.
-  Leave promptly when the interview has ended.
-  On leaving the outer office, thank the receptionist.

### **After the Interview**

The interview process doesn't always end the minute you walk out the door. There may be a few things you have to do to follow up.

It is a good idea to find out at the end of the interview when a hiring decision will be made and what your next contact with the employer should be.

-  If the employer is supposed to call you on a certain day, make sure you are home to receive the call.
  - If you are not called at the time the employer set, you should make a followup call to him or her.
-  If you have arranged to call the employer back, make sure you do it on the day that you agreed upon at the interview.
-  If no arrangement has been made and you have not heard back from the employer in about two weeks, you can give him or her a call to find out the status of the hiring process. Many employers will only call back the successful candidate, so this may be your only way to find out for sure that you did not get the job.

### **Tips on calling employers after the interview:**

- 1** Speak with the person who interviewed you.
- 2** Introduce yourself and remind the interviewer why you are calling. Don't assume he/she will remember.
- 3** The hiring process may take longer than you or they expected. If a decision has not yet been made, ask if you can call back and find out when it would be appropriate to do so. Don't

harass them by phoning every day. If you don't show patience, the potential employer may not either.

**4** If you do not get the job, it's perfectly alright to ask why *in a tactful and sincere manner*.

Example: "Can you tell me what would have made me a better candidate for the position?"

- a. Ask if the employer is aware of any other job openings in your line of work (this continues to show your interest).
- b. Thank them for their time and for considering you.
- c. **Don't burn any bridges.** The person they decide to hire may decline for some reason, or the employer might be hiring again in the near future. You also never know who the employer knows and if you decide to vent your frustration, the word might get around, especially if you are looking for a job or career in a small profession.

**5** If you are offered the position, it is good to show your enthusiasm, but remember to get the following vital information:

- a. When you start work (you may need to negotiate this if you are currently working or going to school).
- b. Salary (you may also negotiate this -- but make sure you have done your research!).
- c. Hours of work - shifts/overtime, benefits, vacation.
- d. Dress codes/uniforms.

**Remember to check out our section on [Keeping Your Job](#).**

**6** Thank the employer, even if you didn't get the job. You never know when they might hire again.



# CAREER MAINTENANCE

## Keeping Your Job

Congratulations on getting hired! All of your hard work has paid off. You got to know yourself using the career planning tools, discovered some opportunities, prepared your resume and cover letter, got an "A" in the interview section and at last you have been offered a job. Way to go!

Now what? You are likely experiencing some feelings of stress. Many questions are occurring to you. This is normal. Starting a new job is a stressful thing. Like most of us, it's probably the unknown that fuels the feelings of anxiety. So what we intend to do here is provide some concrete information to help lessen the number of unknowns.

We suggest two approaches to this exercise. The first is to use the **table of contents** below. Browse the contents and choose the portion that interests you the most. Or you can proceed directly to the [first page](#) and follow the information in a linear sequential manner (one thing after the other).

**REMEMBER**, you got the job because you were the best candidate for the position. Go forth and enjoy.

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### [Before You Start](#)

- Before Accepting
- Before you accept checklist:
- Things to consider checklist:
- Pros & Cons
- Negotiation
- Prepare

### [Your First Day on the Job](#)

- The First Impression
  - 1) Dress
  - 2) Communication
  - 3) Remembering Names
  - 4) Strategies for Remembering Names

- What to Expect on the First Day
- Surviving the First Day

### Your First Week on the Job

- Be Part of the Team
  - 1) Build rapport
  - 2) Be an effective listener
  - 3) Characteristics of a positive attitude
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- How Much to Produce in Your First Week?
- What to Expect Within the First Week
- Surviving The First Week
  - 1) Grunt Work
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### Your First Month on the Job

- Learning
- Relationships
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### And Beyond

- Showing your stuff
- Results
- Dealing with negative responses
- Show your stuff checklist
- Workplace Relationships
- What is Professional Behaviour?
- Why Do People Act the Way They Do?
- Dealing with Peers
- The More Experienced Colleague
- Dealing with Supervisors
- Workplace Politics
- Employer Expectations

## Addendum

- Survey - [Employer Expectations](#)

## Should I Accept This Job?

**Wow!** A job offer. You've spent days, weeks, months working towards this goal. The time and energy required can leave you exhausted. Job searching is not an easy task and you deserve this offer as much as anyone.

**However,** before you start the celebration party, there are a few questions you should ask.

**Is this a definite job offer?** - This may sound a bit ridiculous. You don't have to ask it right out, but it is important to clarify. An employer telling you "We will likely have a position/work for you next week," is different than "We are offering you a full-time position starting next Monday." It is best to be certain about what is being offered. If at all possible, get it in writing.

**So** what does the offer look like? Ask as many questions as you need to gather all of the details.

Wage: What is the starting wage, are there wage increases and when do they take effect, is there room to negotiate on the wage?

Benefits: What are they and when do they take effect? (i.e., medical, dental, life insurance, vacation)

Start date: hours, lunch breaks

Dress code policy

**When** does the employer need a final decision from you? If possible take some time to think about the offer. This will prevent you from accepting without considering all aspects of the job. You don't have to feel rushed into accepting.

## The "Before I Accept" Checklist

**How** confident am I in performing these job duties?

high

medium

low

**What** are my strong points?

know equipment

know programs

know process

quick learner

have experience

good communicator

**What** are my weak points?

nervous with new people

slow learner

unsure of expectations

don't know all duties

### **Other questions to ask yourself**

Does the boss know my weak points?

Should I confirm with the boss my capabilities?

Should I confirm the boss's expectations?

Will people be physically hurt if I don't do my job properly?

Will others lose their jobs if I don't do my job properly?

Will equipment be damaged if I don't do my job properly?

Will I be held responsible for damaged equipment?

Are there job-specific issues I need to consider?

### **Other things to consider**

**What is the average salary/wage for this position in my city?**

**Is the salary/wage contingent upon education/experience?**

**If this is an entry level job, there may not be room for negotiation about the salary/wage. (It is, however, not impossible.)**

**Are there many people with similar skills, talents experiences in your area?**

## **Pros & Cons**

**If you can secure some time to think about the offer then you have the benefit of being able to develop a list of pros and cons. This is a huge advantage. Look at the offer objectively and thoroughly. Gather feedback from family, friends or others in the field. Here is a small checklist of questions you can ask yourself. Be sure to add your own.**



- Will the position be challenging?
- Will you enjoy working with the staff?
- Will there be opportunities to learn and move around within this company?
- Do you need new clothes/tools for this job?
- Are you able to acquire them?
- Is the wage satisfactory?
- The job may not be ideal, but does it meet the majority of your needs?
- What does the offer say about you?

## **Negotiation**

**This is not always a possibility. Remember the point of negotiation is to clearly communicate your value and qualifications to the employer in exchange for money, benefits and position. Here are some points to keep in mind:**

- prior to negotiation, research what average wage and benefit packages look like for similar positions in other companies
- negotiation should be done in person if at all possible
- hold your ground, but know when to compromise by "reading" the situation
- do not discuss personal issues as reasons for higher wage

## **Prepare**

**Spend some time preparing yourself mentally. Entering your new job with an open mind is essential. You can not go into this job with preconceived ideas and strict expectations. Employers look for adaptability and you want to be able to give them that. Have confidence in**

yourself. They offered you the job didn't they? You are friendly, willing to learn, and capable of handling anything that comes your way.

Take it one day at a time and you will most definitely succeed!

## Your First Day on the Job



### The First Impression

The first impression is important as this sets the tone for your future workplace relationships. First impressions are based upon your actions, comments, dress, and non-verbal behaviour.

### Dress

Because you observed how others were dressed at your interview, you already know how to dress on your first day. If you have received a written policy concerning dress, then the first day will be even less confusing. If you are to wear a uniform, make sure it fits, is clean and wrinkle free.

### Communication

In addition to what you say, your body language conveys a powerful message about what you are thinking and feeling. Try to relax and avoid having your body language contradict your verbal message. A few ideas that may help to convey the appropriate message include:



1. be an active listener
2. speak confidently, avoid mumbling
3. shake your fellow employees hands with confidence

4. look people in the eye when you are introduced
5. offer a warm smile

### **Remembering Names**

Try and remember the names of the people you meet. Of course it would be unrealistic, not to mention nearly impossible, to remember everyone's name, but...

### **Strategies for Remembering Names**

- Work on remembering a few each day, pay particular attention to those people you will be working with directly.
- Write names down and go over them in the evening, or use word association techniques.
- Don't be afraid to ask. Asking someone whose name you remember for someone's name you've forgotten is the least awkward.

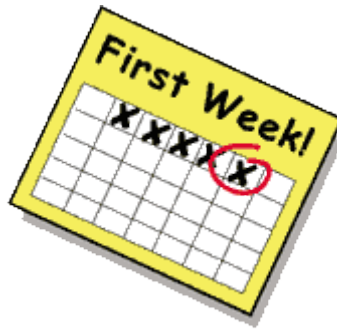
### **What to Expect on the First Day**

- People may ignore you. They may go on with their business without noticing you are there, or may embarrass you just for fun as an initiation to the workplace. Remember, you will not be the "new" person forever.
- People may also go out of their way to welcome you to the company.
- High emotions, excitement, anticipation, nervousness, anxiety, fear.

### **Surviving the First Day**

- Be humble, being nervous is natural.
- Be nice to others first; don't wait for them to be nice to you.
- Have a sincere desire to join the group, let them know either verbally or non-verbally you want to be a contributing team member.
- Try to do everything in your power to have a positive start.
- Observe what is going on around you in the workplace, this will give you a clearer definition of the way things work.
- If there is any confusion about what you should be doing on your first day, seek clarification.

## Your First Week on the Job



### Be Part of the Team

Make an active effort to become a part of the team. A major part of working is being able to get along well with colleagues.

### Build rapport

- Make a concerted effort to build rapport with others
- Building rapport will help you be accepted by co-workers
- Accept and ask for assistance, graciously
- Pitch in willingly for tasks when needed
- Expect to learn tasks from multiple people
- Not important to wow everyone with your wide array of skills/knowledge

### Be an effective listener

- Listen carefully to all instructions you are given, many will be details on policies/procedures. Observe others' reaction to instruction (Listen with eyes and ears.)
- Don't interrupt
- Clarify message immediately if unclear
- Write down details of complicated messages
- Pay attention...don't fake it

### Characteristics of a positive attitude

- Friendly, open, willing to learn, enthusiastic, a good listener, confident, prompt, courteous, hard worker
- Be a comfortable person to be around, communicate openly and freely

### Watch your environment

Much of what you will learn will be experiential.

- How does communication happen? through email, memos, notes, verbal.



- How do breaks work? length, being prompt.

### **How Much to Produce in Your First Week?**

How much one produces and prepares to produce is critical to early and continual success on the job. Striving for quality is most important... practice quality from the beginning. While each job differs in terms of what is expected, do the best job that you can on everything you are given.



#### **1. Expect to have either way too much to do - or not enough**

- If there is little to do, stay busy by job shadowing someone else, or look for relevant information to read
- If there seems too much to do, prioritize the best you can

#### **2. Go over expectations with supervisor**

- Meet at the end of the first week go over job duties, objectives, expectations

### **Surviving The First Week**

#### **Grunt Work**

- Expect lots of grunt work - there is no way to escape the passage all rookies must go through
- Recognize there are mundane, boring tasks associated with every job. Stay positive, and prove you are a team player

#### **Expect the unexpected**

- There will be surprises
- You will experience every emotion possible
- Stay sane (If this is your first full time job consider getting out on your lunch breaks. You will break up the day and come back feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.)
- You are expected to take the initiative, don't expect someone to tell you where you should be, or what you should be doing

#### **Begin to develop an idea about the larger world you have entered**

- Understand policies and procedures
- Work toward gaining a clear understanding of how you fit in to the bigger picture of your company
- Try to determine what people do, and their official titles

#### **Own up immediately to mistakes**

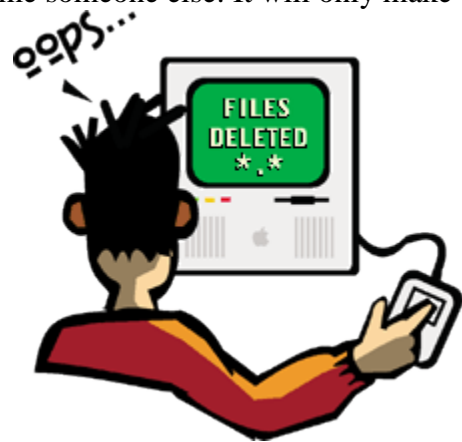
- Don't cover them up, downplay, make excuses, or blame someone else. It will only make the situation worse and make you look immature, dishonest, and/or unprofessional

### Figure out what are the most important things to learn

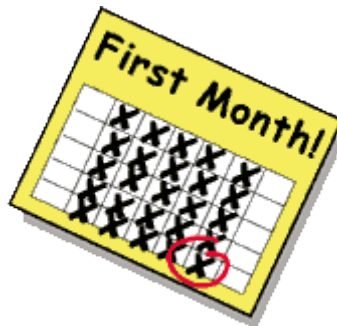
- You will not be able to master everything at once
- Determine what you need to do in order to be productive

### What to Expect Within the First Week

- Completing lots of forms and paperwork
- Work site orientation
- Settling into work area
- Understanding work flow
- Reading company literature (product catalogues, training material, industry reports)
- Performing grunt work/menial tasks



### Your First Month on the Job



### Learning

You may feel non-productive during your first month on the job. There might be a bit of reality to this feeling because, in fact, you are still in the learning phase. At this point, you should have a handle on your responsibilities at the new job. You know where to go when you get to work in

the morning. You also know where to get coffee and where to eat lunch. And you know who to ask for help. However, you may still be wrestling with the larger issues.

- Where you fit in the company's big picture: You've likely gone through new staff orientation and been given a company handbook if there is such a thing. Continuing to ask questions is your best strategy for further learning.
- Your initial tasks and routines have probably been outlined. Clarifying exactly what is expected of you is important. You may be assigned tasks which you find menial. Take all jobs seriously! If your employer can see that you have a professional attitude and respect the fact that all tasks, no matter how small, are important, it won't be long before you find yourself working on the more complex and interesting jobs.
- Politics of the company: This may be the most difficult aspect of your job to deal with. Company politics is what is going on beneath the surface of day to day activities.



### Answers to these questions come from many places

- What do your co-workers spend time on? (is socializing acceptable? Don't be afraid to ask your colleagues.)
- Rituals; does the workplace celebrate employee birthdays? Are awards given out?
- Is the actual physical setting of your workplace conservative or relaxed?
- Do others strictly adhere to start and stop times? Is overtime expected?

Each workplace and situation is different, but existing research has identified three common grouping tendencies:

- camps for and against management, the union, a co-worker, or whatever the cause
- cliques: people who stick together exclusively, both in and outside of work
- critics: hold very negative views of some aspect(s) of the workplace

Try to avoid having to make a choice as to where you fit into the picture. Find the middle ground in all work relationships.

### Relationships

By the first month you will have established some kind of relationship with co-workers and supervisors. It's still early, don't judge too quickly!

### Mind Games

Feelings of doubt are not uncommon during the first month. You may find yourself asking: What am I doing? Is this the right place for me? Does everyone really hate me? Am I as popular as I think I am? Learning something new, and adjusting to a new environment don't happen overnight. One month is really not enough time to judge everything, don't panic. Concentrate on

performing your tasks. Talk to a co-worker you trust about issues which are concerning you. Often times your feelings of insecurity can be easily dismissed.

## Assessment

Toward the end of the first month it is appropriate and beneficial to review your new job and assess your satisfaction with the direction things are going. A personal assessment can be as simple as asking yourself a few questions.

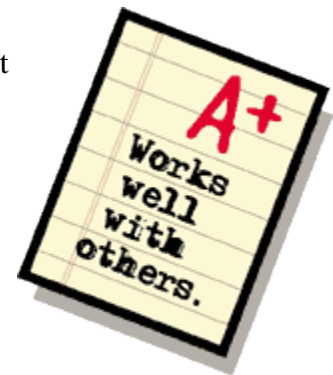
- Am I happy?
- What do I like about this job? What don't I like?
- What can I change?
- Where can I go from here?
- Do I feel I am making progress?
- Have I updated my resume to include my new skills and experience?

Asking family or friends for feedback will also help in your assessment. People close to you will be able to offer insight into any change in your behaviour (good or bad) or mental well-being (including stress level) since you started at the new job. Personal assessments are beneficial not only at the end of the first month but throughout the duration of any job. The best way to prevent issues from getting out of hand is to stay aware of how you are dealing with them. It is a lot easier to change them before they grow too unmanageable.

## Performance Reviews

Many companies conduct performance reviews of employees. These usually don't occur until the three, or six month mark, but it is important to prepare for them or at the very least have some idea what they entail. A performance review is an evaluation of how well you are doing your job. It will likely cover:

- both the specifics (team work, time management) and your general performance
- discussion of your strengths and weaknesses
- creation of plans to improve on problem areas
- setting objectives for the next year
- discussion of potential for promotion
- discussion of the possibility of a raise



Very few people look forward to performance reviews. Anticipating an analysis and evaluation of yourself can be nerve racking. Accepting criticism is never easy but it is essential. The best way to learn and grow is to know your weaknesses so you are able to work on them. And the truth is, it is usually easier for others to identify those weaknesses. We can always improve. Accepting this fact graciously and working to strengthen your weaknesses will both demonstrate your professionalism and allow you to move ahead.

## **Beyond the Basics**

### **Showing your stuff**

**W**elcome to one of the most nebulous areas of the world of work: Showing your stuff. Depending on the nature of your work environment, and the nature of the people you work with, revealing hidden talents, good ideas, or suggestions for change, brings with it many different results.

**S**o before "taking the plunge" and unleashing your plans, take some time to observe what goes on at your place of work. Watch who dominates discussions, who participates in the discussions, and how people react to new ideas, or change. Keep in mind that changing anything, even if it seems insignificant to you, can be scary for many people. Never underestimate the "we've always done it like this" factor. While observing, make notes -- mental, or physical -- on how the people who seem most persuasive deliver their thoughts to the group. Watch who reacts positively, and who doesn't. Listen to their objections, if any are vocalized. Are they based on common sense and the facts at hand, or are there more personal issues behind the protest?

**T**ry and determine why those who seem to have the least amount of influence fail to successfully put their ideas forward. Once you get an understanding of the environment, then you can anticipate questions and begin to understand why things are done as they are. A good way to find out what may be in store, is to discuss your ideas with a co-worker you have come to respect and trust before revealing them to everyone else.

**R**egardless of the type of work involved, you'll have the opportunity to speak one-on-one with your supervisor. This may be the best time to make your ideas known. For one, you won't come off as a hot shot. Secondly, the boss may feel more comfortable about making changes if he/she has an opportunity to share it with the larger group at a later time rather than being put on the spot. Armed with a bit of knowledge about the working environment and your colleagues, chances are you'll make a better impression on everyone when you decide to show your stuff.

**T**here's no best time for anyone in any job to show their stuff. Based on your observations, you are the best one to judge when the time is most appropriate. Don't be afraid to offer suggestions if you believe the time is right.

### **Results**

**W**hen showing your stuff at the workplace, seldom does the basic law of physics stating that for every action there is an equal, and opposite reaction, hold true. Fortunately, the positives tend to out-weigh the negatives. For instance, your supervisor will be impressed that you're interested in the future of the workplace, and in taking more responsibility. If nothing else, coming up with new ideas and concepts shows others your ability to take your experience/education/understanding and turn it into constructive concepts.

If impressed with the ideas, some supervisors will offer you more challenging, more important, or simply more, work. Good bosses like to have thinking workers on board, not only does it reduce their workload, but increases their confidence the work will be done satisfactorily. Some colleagues may even turn to you for help, or consultation, on work they're doing.

Unfortunately, sometimes bringing up suggestions for doing things another way can be looked upon as questioning authority. Some supervisors may take the suggestion personally, believing you doubt their wisdom, and may saddle you with meaningless, or extremely difficult tasks and deadlines. Some bosses may also willingly take credit for your work with those higher up the food chain.

Even if your ideas have been publicly rejected, others may support your suggestions, even if that backing is not vocalized. Don't be discouraged.

Colleagues may also scorn your offerings. Some will look at you as a "boss's pet" for trying to be an achiever. Others will discredit the idea and label you as incompetent, or a trouble maker simply because they didn't come up with the suggestion.

Dealing with negative responses, no matter how tactfully, may, or may not work. Preventing a situation from occurring is the best method to avoid hard feelings, or conflict.

### **Dealing with negative responses**

Most importantly, take a cooling off period before taking further action to ensure you can deal with the situation calmly. If a supervisor seems agitated by your suggestions, meet one-on-one and explain where you're coming from. Ask for a clarification of his/her position to ensure you know why they're upset. Make it clear that no offence was meant, and outline the reasons behind your suggestions.

If your supervisor is taking credit for your work without passing on the credit, ask a colleague if this is common and how it was handled before. If no one has approached the issue, discuss ideas with your co-workers to develop a plan that will effectively communicate your concerns to the supervisor.

Approaching a colleague who gives you a hard time and explaining your take on the situation may be enough to do away with the hot shot stigma. Asking this colleague how she/he would have approached the situation could alleviate the tension. In all cases, stick strictly to the issue-related difficulties, not personality conflicts or problems.

### **Show your stuff checklist:**

- Have others suggested ideas for change?
- How were those suggestions dealt with?
- How were the suggestions presented?
- Were they demanded, recommended, or put up for general discussion?

- Could the suggestions have been presented another way with better results?
- Who seemed receptive to the changes?
- Who seemed opposed to the changes?
- Was opposition to the suggestions given verbally or non-verbally?
- Do you know how the person making the suggestions for change is generally perceived by everyone else?

### **Workplace Relationships**

**R**elationships you encounter at work are different than the ones you have anywhere else. There may be people you wouldn't normally choose to spend time with whom you find yourself spending lots of time, perhaps even as much as 40 hours a week!

**I**t is essential to recognize that work is not foremost a social situation. While it is probably to your advantage to be friendly with people, you should be most interested in establishing and maintaining constructive and professional relationships. Do not let your personal feelings, whether they be good or bad, interfere with your ability to succeed in your new job.

**I**f you happen to make a new friend consider this an added bonus, icing on the cake. If there is conflict with a certain individual, try and remain focussed on the task at hand. Concern yourself less with a person's behaviour than with your need to work together. The basics of work relationships are discussed in the following sections:

- What is professional behaviour?
- Why do people act the way they do?
- Different styles of decision making
- Learning styles
- Dealing with peers
- The more experienced colleague
- Dealing with supervisors
- Personal agendas - workplace politics

### **What is Professional Behaviour?**

**V**ery briefly some basic rules for establishing and maintaining professional relationships include:

- treating people with respect and in return expecting to be treated the same
- recognizing the difference between frivolous socializing and necessary networking
- avoid using people for personal gain
- listen to "company" gossip, you can learn a lot about an organization by listening to what employees say about it
- avoid personal gossip and those who spread this kind of gossip. People who gossip to you are probably gossiping about you
- make your own judgements about people
- take the high road - don't assume the worst from someone's behaviour or treatment of you. Give people the benefit of the doubt

- learn to forgive - don't hold a grudge
- recognize that not everyone will agree with you or approach a situation in the same way you do
- avoid using company time for personal business such as personal visits, phone calls, and emails

### **Why Do People Act the Way They Do?**

There are in fact many many reasons that can really only begin to address the complex issue of why people act the way they do. It can be helpful to consider different styles of communication and interaction commonly displayed by people, including you. Following, are two inventories available on the Internet at no cost to you. They have been selected because they are relatively simple to use, your score is available immediately, and are widely recognized as being valid indicators.

#### \* [Index of Learning Styles](#)

This survey seems to be geared to the student crowd but is still applicable in a work situation. It is valuable as an introduction to learning styles and how they are linked to information presentation.

#### \* [The Keirsey Character Sorter](#)

The Keirsey Character Sorter is designed to identify different kinds of personality temperaments. This measure is slightly more complex but again provides a good indication of differing styles of interaction which may help to explain the rationale behind your behaviour and that of your colleagues.

Most importantly, however, it is necessary for you to pay attention to the way people act and interact around you. You are your own best judge of character and situations.

### **Dealing with Peers**

This could be the trickiest relationship to develop and maintain. These are the people with whom you are competing with for promotions, raises, and recognition. They can, however, be your closest allies and confidants. Colleagues don't have to be best friends, but you do need to be able to work with them in order to effectively perform your job and ultimately to work toward the goals of the organization. Again, do not let your personal feelings, whether they be good or bad, interfere with your ability to succeed in your new job.

While you may have an instant rapport with some individuals, there are bound to be awkward moments. Some individuals are reserved in their attitude towards newcomers, offering little support. Perhaps a friend of theirs applied unsuccessfully for your position? Maybe they resent having to train you? Maybe it just takes them a while to warm up? It is difficult to be certain. Some co-workers will accept your ability to do the job from the start. Others will need to see it. Maintaining professionalism, asking for and accepting advice and being friendly is a good strategy for handling these relationships or lack thereof.



## **The More Experienced Colleague**

Another layer of complexity in the peer relationship involves working with more experienced colleagues. You may have been hired for your enthusiasm, stated commitment, and your ability to get things done, however, recognize that things worked in the organization, perhaps even prospered, before you arrived. It is really easy, and not uncommon, for recently hired employees to think they know everything. Assume, in light of not knowing anything to the contrary, your colleagues probably know more about the organization than you. Act humbly and consider the situation an excellent learning opportunity. You may, in fact, have more expertise in some areas. Working with a more experienced colleague may provide the perfect opportunity to use the best of the both of your experiences. Again, consider this is an excellent learning opportunity.

## **Dealing with Supervisors**

Ultimately it is your boss who can ensure or prevent your success on the job. (Keep in mind everything in the previous section about establishing and maintaining relationships with peers.) Consider your supervisor's style of interaction. Observe how others treat your boss, and how they are treated in return. Pay attention to those behaviours and people who are rewarded for their contributions and those who are not. Again, it is not so important to focus on your boss's personality. What really matters is you develop a professional relationship that fosters open communication and focuses on getting the job at hand accomplished. Some basic considerations might be:

- consider how he or she prefers to have information presented. Does he or she like to spend some time catching up about the weekend before commencing work or get right to the purpose of your visit?
- don't waste your supervisor's time. If you have an idea or suggestion to present, make sure you have thought it out thoroughly before hand. A general rule of thumb is if you have some problem that needs to be brought to your supervisor's attention, provide possible alternatives or solutions to the problem. Chances are your supervisor works hard enough, or at least thinks that way, and is not looking for more work.
- supervisors need to know they can depend on you to effectively perform your job. This makes their job easier, or at least lets them focus on the responsibilities and duties that go along with being the boss.
- identify the supervisor's expectations of you.
- don't expect perfection or complete understanding.
- address an issue before it spins chaotically out of control.
- if possible, don't go above a supervisor's head.
- take responsibility for mistakes.

## **Workplace Politics**

So you have followed all the rules. In spite of behaving professionally, however, you still seem to be in an awkward, uncomfortable, even unworkable situation with your colleagues, or even more worrisome, your boss! Welcome to the murky grey area of workplace politics and the subtle workings of the corporate culture. It is important to recognize there may be many things

going on below the surface in any work situation. Once again your best strategy, initially, is to observe what is going on around you.

**W**orkplace politics is often a direct reflection of the style of the manager or supervisor, and staff response to that style. There are always rules to be followed, but these are both written and unwritten. You need to determine which are followed and which are not.

**O**ne common misconception is that while everyone appears outwardly to be working toward ensuring the success of the organization, there may be people, including yourself, who are also concerned with looking good in order to advance their own careers. This is acceptable and even understandable. Unfortunately, empire building, when people put their own agendas ahead of the organization's, can occur. Petty conflicts may also get in the way of effective working relationships.

**N**o two work situations will be the same. As a caution, recognize that everything is not what it seems. Once again, you can usually stay productive by focussing on the task at hand. Workplace politics does not necessarily need to be viewed as a bad thing. It is just a reality.

## **Employer Expectations**

The following lists contain responses to a survey from employers in the trades, government, service sector, and office environments. Consider each response carefully. How can these help you keep your job?

### **First Day**

- punctual
- follow dress code
- open to learn
- enthusiastic
- energetic
- prepared to complete paperwork
- ask questions
- take initiative
- show interest
- pay attention
- know where to go the next day

## First Month

- responsible
- you know what you're talking about
- willing to admit mistakes, and what you do and don't know
- willing to learn from others; ask questions
- have an understanding of the company
- know how different people like to work
- meet standards for performance goals
- show incentive
- show commitment to the workplace
- excited about working for the company

## Showing Your Stuff

- if experienced, new ideas are welcome immediately, if inexperienced, wait a month or two and present ideas in appropriate manner
- wait until the second month until you know the work environment

## Leaving Your Job

### Quitting Your Job?

Like Lester Burnham in *American Beauty*, you've had it with your job. You show up to work each day, go through the motions and return home at night. As the months turn into years, you wonder if life needs to be this monotonous. You fantasize about quitting your job and going to work in a fast food restaurant - or owning your own business, where you call the shots.

In the movies, it's possible to tell the boss off and still negotiate a great severance package. In real life, things are more complicated. If you offend your boss, he or she might make you regret it later. Quitting your job can be a touchy situation. Ensure strong emotions don't compromise future job opportunities.

Deciding whether to quit your job raises many questions. Should you inform your co-workers about your job angst, allowing your inner drama to become a daily soap opera for the office to enjoy? Can your distress at work be fixed by better coffee and new plants? Or, is your distress deeper-seated; something that can't be fixed without better job duties and a few new people? Furthermore, how do you write a letter of resignation?

We suggest two approaches to this exercise. The first is to go directly to the [index/table of contents](#) page, browse the content and choose the portion that interests you the most. Or you can proceed

directly to the [first page](#) and follow the information in a linear sequential manner (one thing after the other).

## **Index/table of contents**

### **[Introduction](#)**

#### **[I Want to Quit, But Why?](#)**

##### A) Signs and Possible Solutions

- Stuck in a rut
- I didn't think I'd be doing this
- Make a like/dislike list

##### B) Is it the Job or Career You Can't Stand

- Reasons to consider a new job
- Reasons to consider a new career

### **[Consider This First](#)**

- Quitting Outright
- Work Searches While Employed
- General Considerations

### **[I Know I Have to Leave, Now What?](#)**

- Changing careers -- identify a goal
- Changing jobs -- rules to follow

### **[Giving Notice](#)**

- How to give notice
- The Counter Offer
- Letter of Resignation template
- The exit interview

### **[The Lighter Side](#)**

## I Want to Quit... But Why?

Thousands of people quit their jobs every year. Why? It's impossible to say for certain, but chances are alternatives exist before taking that last step. First, try to figure out what caused these feelings. Could it be your work environment? Have your ideals or goals changed? Is the job not what you envisioned? Here are a few suggestions to consider before saying: "I quit."

### A) Signs And Possible Solutions

#### *Could the Grass be Greener on the Other Side?*

##### Signs:

- You have stopped learning or are getting stale
- Bored / unchallenged
- Job offers little personal growth

**Solutions:** You may be stuck in a rut that is easily remedied. Volunteer to take on extra duties or ask for more responsibility. If denied, don't panic; instead, try [volunteering](#) elsewhere on your free time.

Maybe you're one of the many suffering repetition burnout. Is there a cure? While you may not be able to change the tasks, there are a few things you can try to keep your job fresh. Here are a few suggestions:

- Take a course that would be fun or helpful to your career
- Take an early or late lunch to miss the crowds
- Take a walk, a sauna, or a nap instead of lunch
- Try changing your shift
- If in a large company, ask to change departments/crews/teams

#### *I Have to do This?*

##### Signs:

- You are overwhelmed by the day-to-day tasks of the job
- Boss seems unrealistic or over-demanding
- You are not doing what you were hired to do

**Solutions:** Take a deep breath and look at the bigger picture. Maybe your boss doesn't hate you; it could be the opposite. She may love your work and gives you extra because she thinks you can handle it.

If the load is causing turmoil in your life, consider a talk with your boss. Determine priority projects and establish a timeline acceptable to you both. Or, try and explore why you are receiving work you're not qualified to complete properly. Maybe ask your boss for additional training or seek the training yourself because you know where your weaknesses lie.

Sometimes people are hired for a position going through changes and you are given work that's not what you were originally hired to do. If this is the case, be proactive. Meeting with your boss and go over the duties and projects that were expected of you when first hired. Chances are, if you are on good terms with your boss and are a valuable employee to the company, he will want to keep you on, and will work to better accommodate your needs.

### ***Can't Find Anything Positive About the Job?***

#### **Signs:**

- You resent your boss and/or colleagues
- You can't stand your working hours
- The thought "I hate my job" constantly replays in your mind
- You dread going to work
- You are often late or just don't go in

**Solutions:** Grab a pen and paper. Now make two columns: likes and dislikes. Start jotting and be specific. Don't write: "I hate my boss." Write: "I hate it when my boss takes credit for work I've done," or "it makes me uncomfortable when my boss criticizes me in public." Once you've exhausted your dislikes (if possible!) record things you enjoy about your job. Again, be specific; don't leave the column blank, this will not help. Whether it is your co-workers, a client, or a flexible work schedule, there has to be something that keeps you going.

### ***Finished... Now What?***

Do some analyzing. Look over your dislikes carefully. Can anything be easily rectified by confronting the problem, or are you looking at a job or career change?

### **B) Is it the Job or Career You Can't Stand?**

This is a tough question. You need to evaluate the company, co-workers, and the work you are doing.

#### ***Reasons to consider a new job***

- 1) Maybe the company's culture and values are not right for you. If the company is unethical, and you are an ethical person - this is not a good match.
- 2) The company appears to be going out of business.
- 3) The relationship with your boss / co-workers is permanently damaged.
- 4) You are so stressed your health is at risk.
- 5) Co-worker's take credit for your work.

6) A co-worker or supervisor is making life [unbearable](#).

If this sounds familiar, then it might be the job, not the career. Sometimes there is nothing you can do to help the company, just help yourself by [getting out](#) while you can.

### ***Reasons to consider a new career***

- 1) You know what you want out of work and are not finding it along your current path.
- 2) Your life circumstances have changed and your current [career path](#) may never meet your needs.

A career is not something you often fall into, but something you work at over time - hence the term career path. You may not love your current job, but you likely will have to "pay your dues" to get to where you want to go. For example, if you want to be the marketing director of a company - you will NOT start there. Most likely you will start at an entry-level job, or close to it, and work your way up.

### **Consider This First**

There are many pros and cons when it comes quitting your job. Everyone's situation will differ. Carefully consider this information on quitting outright and looking for work while still employed before making a final decision.

### **Quitting Outright**

- If you quit, you will lose a job reference and any discussion of your work history immediately becomes more complicated. If you believe you are going to be fired for poor performance, quitting may be easier to explain to another employer than being fired. Always be prepared to answer questions about why you [quit or were fired](#).
- The longer you are out of work, the more another employer may question your motivation or competence.
- If you quit without having another job arranged, you may wind up accepting equally unsatisfying work just to ensure you have money.
- Quitting means you are not eligible to collect [Employment Insurance](#) benefits.

### **Work Searches While Employed**

- If your boss has been supportive of others changing work in the past be up front about your job search and ensure she knows you will continue to be a contributing member of the team until you leave.
- If your boss has not been supportive of others changing work, or you are unsure of her reaction, use your judgement. You may be best to keep word of your plans quiet, you never know who hears what. If word leaks and the boss isn't happy, be prepared for a hostile reaction and the possibility of being

without this job sooner than planned.

- If possible, try scheduling job interviews for for an evening, a day off, over the lunch hour, or on a weekend.
- If you must take time from your current work for an interview, try to arrange to make up the time later in the day or week. Be cautious. If you don't normally dress for success at work, don't start now as this may raise suspicion. Change elsewhere. Don't over-use sick time either.
- If you stay at your current job while looking for another, you are potentially in a better position to negotiate a higher wage or salary because you will still have a regular income.

### **General Considerations**

- Company equipment such as computers and photocopiers, and company time should NOT be used to write cover letters and resumes. Do not have potential employers call at your current place of work and do not use your work e-mail address. (If you are between 15 and 24 the Calgary Youth Employment Centre offers these services for free.)
- If your work is causing undo stress and affecting your health, you may be better off quitting. But keep [motivated](#) to begin a new work search.
- If you believe you were wrongfully fired contact the [provincial government](#).

### **I Know I Have to Leave, Now What?**

You have made your decision; it's time for a career or job change. Changing jobs can be easy, but accomplishing a major career change is a more complex undertaking.

### **Changing Careers**

First, begin researching your chosen field. Read about it, shadow someone who works in a career you are considering and network with people in the same career field. Figure out what the [day-to-day work](#) is really like. You may not want to jump out there and be an aerospace engineer like you thought.

Once decided on a career goal, develop a strategy to get you there. Major career changes do not occur overnight. Want to open a bookstore? You might want to work at one first to learn if you like the business and what is required to be successful. By identifying a target, you can build a path to get you there.

### **Changing Jobs**

Changing jobs isn't something you do on a whim - it also takes preparation, knowledge, and planning. Once you have determined what type of job you want, begin looking. Choose at least three different jobs that interest you, as the job you really want may not be available.



Here are some basic rules to remember when changing jobs:

Rule #1: Make your [job search](#) a full-time job!

Rule #2: Make a "things to do" list. Keep a list of contacts. They'll help you be organized.

Rule #3: Contact friends, relatives and former bosses. Let them know you are [looking for another job](#). In some cases they may know of jobs available in your area of interest.

Rule #4: Check [more than one place](#) for a job.

Don't become discouraged if you don't get a job offer the first day or the first week of your search. Keep trying. When you have a good attitude and believe in yourself, you will likely find the job you want.

## **Giving Notice**

I am outta here. Done. Finished. Adios. Bye, bye. See ya later.

Wait! Unless you've been fired, or for whatever reason (safety, mental health, physical health, etc.) you can't stick around any longer, you need to give appropriate notice before you leave a job. Not only is it the "right" thing to do but you don't want to burn any bridges.

There are typically two ways people resign, in person or via a written letter of resignation - or both. Usually, even if you do meet with a supervisor in person to resign, she will ask you to draft a letter of resignation.

If you are comfortable speaking directly with a supervisor to resign ... go for it. Be prepared though too. Think of what you are going to say ahead of time, try not to end things on a negative note, and be prepared for some kind of reaction. Your supervisor's reaction could range from crying profusely and begging you to stay to: "See ya, pack up your office." If you've been in your position for any length of time you will probably have some idea of what the reaction might be, but be prepared anyhow.

Hopefully, by this stage of the game you know why you are leaving. Be prepared to answer this question. Try, if at all possible, to keep it positive. You don't want to be slamming your employer at this point. If you are leaving for better money, saying "a really great opportunity has come up" might suffice. If you are leaving for other reasons, try to keep it in a positive light.

## **The Counter Offer**

You might also get a counter offer at this point so be prepared to answer to that. If you're leaving because of low pay, and your employer offers you more money, you should know ahead of time if that will be enough to keep you.

It might also just be time leave and go onto other things. Fair enough. In a positive way try and

let your employer know this. Consider saying something like this: "Well, you know Joe, it's been great working here and I've learned a great deal but I'm looking for new challenges. This (new job) seems to be just what I need."

Don't be surprised if you get a response like: "We are sorry to see you go, it's been great working with you. Can you draft a letter of resignation for our records." And don't panic. Your resignation letter need not be complicated.

You will want to draft your letter in a professional format. Keep it short, simple, and don't trash anyone -- keep it positive. Have a look at the following example:

John Goodbye  
1234 See Ya Later Street. N.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
A1V 2D3

Mr. U.R. Bossman  
Yummy Food Restaurant  
2345 Macleod Trail S.  
Calgary, Alberta  
A2B B3C

January 15, 2002

Please accept this letter as notice I am resigning from my position as Sous Chef with Yummy Food Restaurant. My last day of employment will be February 2, 2002.

Sincerely,

John Goodbye

"That's way too easy," you say. Well, it is really that easy. There's no need to go into great detail in your resignation letter. If you believe discussing your reasoning with your boss is appropriate try to do this in person. If you are handing in your letter of resignation prior to informing your boss, make sure you're available if she wants to discuss it with you. Remember, we're trying to not burn any bridges and hoping to keep a future reference on your side!

### **What's an Exit Interview?**

Whew. You've officially resigned. It's over... you thought. Then your boss asks for an exit interview. What's that you say?

Companies will generally request exit interviews to get feedback on why you are leaving. You can expect to be asked questions like:

- Why are you leaving?
- What was it about (our company) you liked? Disliked?
- Do you believe you were treated fairly here?
- Did you receive the support and supervision you believe you needed/wanted?

It's a good idea to try and be as honest as possible when answering questions in an exit interview, but be prepared for some questions that might make you uncomfortable. If you aren't comfortable answering something, explain that you aren't comfortable and don't answer. This isn't the time (as some might think) to really "give it to your employer" and tell them everything you hated about your job.

### **The Lighter Side**

#### **TOP 10 REASONS TO QUIT YOUR JOB**

10. You hate your boss/ugly co-workers
9. Bad coffee
8. Mid-life crisis
7. You could dedicate all of your time towards winning the lottery/ chat rooms/ mapping your horoscope
6. Longer naps: people expect you to produce
5. Fantasy life is so much better
4. Your pet misses you
3. You could be selling slurpees on a tropical island
2. You suspect your co-workers couldn't get by without you, and you want to test the theory
1. You always wanted to be Superman/ Wonderwoman

#### **TOP 10 REASONS TO STAY AT YOUR JOB**

10. You're in love with your boss/good looking co-workers
9. It gets you out of the house
8. It's something to complain about

7. You get to wear a power suit and/or carry a cell phone
6. You like telling people/being told what to do
5. You wear a uniform and don't want the pressure of choosing your own clothes each day
4. Opportunity to practice penmanship while taking meeting minutes
3. You can get caught up with personal e-mail and phone calls
2. Office gossip is the most exciting thing in your life
1. Retirement is only decades away

## Seeking A Raise

Asking for a raise can be a pleasant and rewarding experience -- **\$cha-ching\$**. On the other hand, it can be a blow-out all the way to unemployment. Unfortunately, because no bosses are alike, there is no guaranteed formula to successfully ask for, and get, a raise.

Asking for a raise is a fine art requiring careful, prior, thought. Before getting down to the nitty gritty of actually approaching the boss and asking for a raise give this three-part process -- Things to Consider, Preparing Your Plan, Taking Action -- some consideration and decide what's best for your situation.

### Things to Consider

Is a policy in place? For instance, what is the employer's policy on raises. Is there a raise schedule the company follows? This is likely true if you work in a union environment. Even if you aren't, the company may have a schedule of raises and when you can expect to get one. Apprentices, for example, receive regularly scheduled wage increases as they gain experience and complete required schooling. Co-workers, those you trust, may know and they may also be able to offer advice on approaching the boss.

**Put yourself in the boss's shoes** Bosses have a different way of looking at work than employees. They have to consider how much money the business spends on things like wages, supplies, equipment.... They also must consider how much money the business brings in to pay for things like wages, supplies and equipment. Imagine the boss thinking like this:

## **Money coming in (INCOME) - Money going out (COSTS) = ?**

If the answer is not positive, chances for a raise are slim. Also keep in mind a boss may already have a salary figure in mind for the type of work you do. The boss may not be willing to pay anyone more than \$X for a certain type of work no matter if it's entry level or a senior position.

What are your reasons? You will likely need a few reasons for getting a raise. Just showing up, being nice and doing what you are told probably won't cut it with a lot of employers. Don't explain why you "need" one. Everybody "needs" more money for a new corvette, kids or whatever. Ask for a raise because you deserve one, not because of your personal situation.

Some might say: "Well, I need more money to live. I have to get a raise or get another job!" That is a valid reason to seek a raise but not an argument likely to influence a boss. Back up your request with work-related details.

How long have you worked there? The timing of asking for a raise will depend on where you work and the type of work you are doing. If you are hauling lawn mowers doing landscape maintenance for a summer, the timeline to consider will differ from working as an entry-level engineer. Most employers consider anything before three to six months as "probation" and won't give a raise before then. After six months you may have earned some credibility with your boss and by then he/she might have a better idea what kind of worker you are. This can influence a boss's perception of a raise.

How far are you willing to go? If the boss says no, are you going to quit? While not being paid what you believe fair is frustrating, remember, whatever you are getting at this point is probably more than what you would get unemployed.

Saying: "Gimme a raise or I'm going to quit," without room for compromise may be tempting. But a confrontation with your boss may not only fail to get you your raise, it could get you a security escort out of the building. If this is really the last straw you may want to re-consider your current employment path.

If you are prepared to compromise, what kinds of compensation would you be willing to accept? Some bosses may be reluctant to boost your pay cheque but might consider: bonuses at different times of the year; giving additional benefits; giving more days off with pay; and so on. Consider these the "Plan B" items. You might have other suggestions for your employer about how you might be compensated if he/she isn't taking the bait on the salary increase.

## **Preparing your plan**

Examine the company Save yourself some time at first and find information about how well the company is doing. If the company is doing well financially then your chances are better than if the company is struggling. If the company seems slow or doing poorly your chance of getting a

raise is pretty much zero. You may want to wait until things pick up a little before asking for your raise.

**Prepare some arguments** If things seem to be going pretty well, put together some arguments which will let the employer know that the "cost" portion of the equation isn't badly effected by this request. Here are some example arguments:

1. Sales are up. And you had something to do with that. There's more INCOME;
2. You have saved the company money by... COSTS are going down;
3. You developed some new methods of doing things so COSTS are going down;
4. Because you have taken on additional tasks, the employer hasn't had to hire even more staff, keeping COSTS down;
5. Being a devoted employee, your employer hasn't had to train people for a long time and this keeps COSTS down.

**You get the idea.** Use the equation to your advantage. Figure out ways to show how you contributed to INCOME going up and/or COSTS going down.

**Think carefully about this.** Often there are creative ways to show you have contributed to a better "bottom line." Be prepared to back up your statements with proof of some kind.

**Research pay rates** Asking for something realistic in your field is key to getting a "yes" to your request. There are some sites where you can find what people in your field generally make. If you want to ask for more than what people are typically paid make sure you have a REALLY strong case... most employers pay in a particular range (depending on the industry). Here's some sites to find that out:

- [Alberta Occinfo](#)
- [Salary.com](#)

**Remember** you are comparing incomes earned by other people working locally, not those in another province or country.

**Don't forget** There are some things that if you say or do aren't going to get you your raise. No matter how excited you get about a raise never complain you are being paid unfairly in relation to other employees. Saying: "Jack makes so much more" will likely only result in your boss defending his/her position on paying you less.

**Do not get angry or upset** as this will not help you or your boss. Instead, rehearse how the meeting will go. Prepare for this as you would a [job interview](#). Practice saying what you want to say and how you will respond to the different answers the boss may have. Have a friend or family member help.

## Taking action

Make an appointment. Book a time to speak with your boss. Don't just drop in. If he/she is busy it may be tempting for him/her to say no and carry on working. Here's what you might say to schedule an appointment with your boss:

"I was hoping I might be able to ask you some questions, is there a good time we can sit down for a minute?"

Before doing so, double check you have everything you need in case the boss says: "Now is a good time."

Here's a quick checklist:

1. You have decided whether or not the raise is the last straw and are prepared to look for other work;
2. You have considered the boss's situation;
3. You have some evidence of your value as an employee how you have lowered COSTS and/or increased INCOME;
4. You have a reasonable idea about what would be a satisfactory raise;
5. You are prepared to negotiate in a calm, straight forward manner.

## The Negotiations

So how to start? Well, say things in a way that seems comfortable and think of it initially as a discussion. Consider saying something like:

**You:** "Thanks for meeting with me. I was hoping that we might discuss a raise."

**There are any number of responses you might get but expect:**

**Boss:** "We don't have any money for raises."

To which you might reply (in your own words):

**You:** "Well, I have been thinking about that and I wanted you to know that I've done some things as of late which have saved/earned the company money. I (list off some of your stuff)."

You might also get the reply:

**Boss:** "What did you have in mind?"

To which you might say:

**You:** "Well, with my recent (accomplishment, cost-saving, income increasing stuff) I thought that an increase of (whatever you researched) could be considered."

If you aren't met with agreement, try some of your "Plan B" options.

**You:** "Perhaps instead of the wage increase would you be willing to consider some days off, increased benefits, etc.?"

If you are still getting a negative response keep calm and ask:

**You:** "Are there some things I might do to be eligible for a raise?"

**Be prepared for what you might find out!** You might get some feedback about areas where you could improve. Take notes. If, in time, you decide on trying for another raise you'll know what the boss wants. Whether you get a raise or not, thank your boss for his/her time and get back to work.

As you can see, the waters of seeking a raise can be murky. No two bosses and no two work situations are the same. Seeking a raise may leave you rolling in dough, looking for [work elsewhere](#), staying put or considering a change. There simply is no way to tell beforehand. Even careful planning may not get the result you want. If you are prepared for all possible responses, though, then you can at least be satisfied knowing you've done all you can do. Good luck.

## Youth Employment Standards

The following suggested Employment Standards and Labour Relations Information are reprinted with permission courtesy of [Alberta Human Resources and Employment](#).

### Adolescents

Adolescents, those 12, 13 or 14 years of age, may be employed without a permit from the Director of Employment Standards as a:

- delivery person of small wares deliveries for a retail store,
- clerk or messenger in an office,
- clerk in a retail store,
- delivery person for the distribution of newspapers, flyers, or handbills, and
- the following occupations in the restaurant and food services industry, with special conditions: host/hostess duties; cashier duties; dish washing; bussing tables; waiting on tables; providing customer service; assembling orders; and cleaning.

For any other type of work, permission from the Director of Employment Standards must be obtained, in addition to written parental consent, before an adolescent can be employed.



A parent or guardian of an adolescent must always provide the employer with written consent before the adolescent may be employed and begin working.

The employer must ensure that the employment is not, or is not likely to be, injurious to the life, health, education or welfare of the adolescent.

Adolescents can work a maximum of:

- 2 hours on a school day, and
- 8 hours on a non-school day, and cannot work between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Adolescents must be paid at least minimum wage

## **Young Persons**

Young persons are those 15, 16 or 17 years of age. In certain types of employment, there are restrictions as to what hours a young person can work and to the level of supervision required. If a young person is employed in a:

- hotel, motel or other place that provides overnight accommodation to the public, or
- the premises of any retail business selling:
  - food or beverages, whether alcoholic or not,
  - any other commodities, goods, wares or merchandise, or
  - gasoline, diesel fuel, propane or any other petroleum product,

the young person must work with, and in the continuous presence of at least one individual 18 years of age or older during the hours of 9:00 p.m. to midnight. The young person cannot work at all in these types of employment from midnight to 6:00 a.m. For more information about employment standards, including the employment of adolescents and young persons:

Click: [www.gov.ab.ca/hre/employmentstandards](http://www.gov.ab.ca/hre/employmentstandards) , or  
Call: (780) 427-3731, toll-free by first dialing 310-0000

Employees must be paid earnings at least once per month, and not later than 10 days after the end of each pay period.

Employees must receive at least eight hours rest when changing from one shift to another. During each shift in excess of five consecutive hours of work, an employee is entitled to at least 30 minutes of rest, paid or unpaid. Shorter breaks totalling 30 minutes are acceptable. Some exceptions apply, such as emergencies or where different rest provisions are agreed to under a collective agreement.

In Alberta, employees have the right to bargain collectively with their employers. The Labour Relations Code guarantees this right and establishes methods for employees to choose trade union representation.

