

Job Search Guide

The thought of finding a new job, whether it is your first job or a career change, can feel like a daunting task. This guide is here to help you break down a job search into manageable steps and help give you the tools to land your next opportunity.

Want to watch instead of read? Check out our webinar recording of [Launch an Active Job Search Campaign](#)

Define Your Goals

What are you looking for in your next job? Are you looking for more responsibility? To move up in a current career path? Maybe you are looking for a shorter commute? What do you need from a new job in terms of company culture, opportunities for growth, pay and benefits, and job stability? All of these questions (and more) are important to think about as you define what role(s) you are willing to apply to. Work to rank all the areas you are looking for in a new job to help you sort out where your priorities.

In addition to the above, you need to think about the skills and experience you already have and how that might fit into the job you are seeking. If you are seeking to make a career change from one industry to another think about what skills you have in your current field and how they might transfer into a new field. If you are newer to the workforce and are trying to figure out a career path it can be helpful to invest some time in personality tests and job preference tests (Meyers Brigs, StregthsFinder, etc) . You can pay to work with a career coach/counsellor to evaluate these test with you, but there are also a number of free resources online that can point you in the right direction. Please note that these tests do not tell you exactly what field you should work in, but may help you identify the type of work you may find success and fulfillment in.

Once you have narrowed down the type of work you want to do and the field you want to do it in, do a quick search for the types of jobs and job titles you are interested in. Do you meet the qualifications required for the job? Do you need to go back to school to get a certificate, certification, or skills in a certain area? If you are looking at a higher level job, is there a slightly lower one you could take to get your foot in the door?

While you are goal setting, set yourself some realistic expectations for your job search and focus on the aspects of the job search that you can control. Look through the rest of the guide and see what measurable steps you can take to advance your job search.

Get Your Supporting Documents in Order

In order to apply to almost any job you will need a resume (see [Resume Guide](#)) and cover letter (See [Cover Letter Guide](#)). Depending on the industry/job you are applying for you may also need supporting documentation such as licenses, certifications, certificates, official/unofficial transcripts, and/or examples of past work. Gather all the documents into one organized place, and if possible have them scanned into a job search folder on your computer or in the cloud.

Screen Your Social Media

Do an audit of ALL your social media channels. Are there things on there you wouldn't want an employer to see? Check your privacy settings and secure your accounts to limit access to those who are not closest to you or already connected to you. The one exception is LinkedIn, make sure your profile is fully complete and your settings allow you to show up in searches by recruiters. Check out our [Networking Guide](#) to learn more about networking on LinkedIn.

Job Search Guide

Make a Schedule

Job searching can at times be a long process. In addition to setting your goals, think about the steps and time required to reach them. If you are currently in-between opportunities block out a work day schedule and “go to work” each day looking for a job and consistently give yourself breaks (like weekends) to detach from the work of looking for a job.

If you are currently working and looking to change roles the schedule is just as important to navigate your current role and find the new one. Set aside blocks of time to work on your job search and just like those who are looking for work full time, set a side time to take breaks and not burn out in your search. If you are able it can be helpful to take a day off work from your regular job and work on your job search.

Know Your Resources and Tap Your Network

While preparing to start your job search, it is important to take stock of your resources and network. Use the following tips to think about what you may already have access to.

- Who do you know in your family and friends that may be hiring? Could do an information interview? Has made it in the field you hope to work in and can provide you additional connections?
- Who do you know on LinkedIn? Are there connections you can reach out to right away or do you need to do some relationship building first? (See [Networking Guide](#))
- Where are the jobs you are looking for posted?
 - Company Websites, industry specific websites (like governmentjobs.com), industry associations websites, alumni associations or university career center job boards, large job gathering websites like LinkedIn, Indeed, or Glassdoor
- Do you have past faculty, teachers, certificate instructor that have a connection to the industry you are looking to work in?

Apply to Jobs

You have made it through all the prep work and tapped into your network and now need to apply for some jobs.

- Read job descriptions thoroughly and follow all application instructions. (that includes filling out all the pesky employment history sections)
- Many jobs you come across online have an application deadline or ‘close date’ when a job application closes to new applications. Many companies will keep accepting applications after the close date, but likely aren’t reviewing applications that come in after that date.
- When possible apply to positions as soon as they come on the market to have your best shot at being in the first batch of applications reviewed.
- Many company websites and job boards will let you set up notifications when certain jobs have posted. It is recommended to set several of these alerts to be notified when new job opportunities you are interested in pop up.
- Match the key words from the job description in your resume and cover letter speak to the duties and qualifications of the job. Unless explicitly told not to in the job posting, plan on providing custom resume and cover letters for each application.

Job Search Guide

- If you meet 70% of the job requirements and it is a job you are really interested in you should apply
- Track your Job applications. It is helpful to create a tracking sheet of all the jobs you have applied to know when they last reached out, where you are in the interview process, and how much follow-up you have done with each job posting.

Common Job Search Websites:

The following list is not an all-encompassing list of job websites. But it is a good place to start.

[Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)

[Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com)

[Governmentjobs.com](https://www.governmentjobs.com)

[LinkedIn Jobs](https://www.linkedin.com/jobs)

[ZipRecruiter](https://www.ziprecruiter.com)

[Usajobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov)

Don't forget to check out company websites, industry association websites, and niche job boards for specific industries.

Follow-up

- Be patient. Job searching can take weeks or several months depending on the job market.
- In your job tracking sheet you created earlier in the job search process, track all of your communications with the company you are applying to.
- You can routinely follow up on a job application but shouldn't follow up too frequently. It is good to keep several weeks between your follow-up communications. Keep in mind the workload of the recruiter and don't pester them, but also keep in contact frequently enough to stay on top of their mind.
- If you get a notification that the company is not moving forward with your application, send a thoughtful thank you to the recruiter for their time and consideration. You can also ask about other opportunities the recruiter might know about at the company that you might be a good fit for. Keep in mind that just because you didn't get the first opportunity, there may be another, and you want to leave a good impression with the recruiter when the next opportunity crosses their desk.

References

- Many jobs ask for professional references and in some cases character references. It is important to put some time into picking your references, it isn't always as simple as putting your last boss.
- In an ideal world you would be able to give your last boss or series of last direct supervisors as your references, provided that you have done good work for those supervisors and expect them to give you a good reference. If you have concerns with your current supervisor you shouldn't include them in your reference list and should see if you can use a co-worker or another supervisor with knowledge of your work.
- Many employers want one of your references to be your current supervisor, if you are concerned about jeopardizing your current role, you might say a reference from a current supervisor can be provided if an offer is pending.
- Always ask a reference for permission to use them as a reference. It also serves as a good opportunity to network with past employers and bosses and keep the connection active.
- Some references will want to see the job description you are applying for so they can speak to your accomplishments for your new opportunity. Be sure to get them the documentation they need.

Job Search Guide

- If you have a reference that works in the company that you want to work for, include them as internal references often carry lots of weight.
- If you do not have any previous paid work experience supervisors to use as a reference, consider using someone who has overseen any volunteer work, school work, or community work that can attest to your skills for the new opportunity.