

# TOP 10 Ways to Find a Job

When you're job hunting, it pays to use a variety of approaches. Here you'll find ten ways that you can look for, find, and land a good job.

## 1. Networking

Most companies would prefer to hire someone who is connected to them in some way, or who's been recommended by someone they know. This is why so many jobs never get advertised or posted—and why it's so important for you to reach out to the people in your network.

## 2. Job websites

Nowadays, one of the most common ways to find a job is to check job postings on websites such as [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), [Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com), [Monster.com](https://www.monster.com), [Snagajob.com](https://www.snagajob.com), and [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com).

## 3. Company websites

Many companies advertise job openings on their own websites. Go online and check out the companies you're interested in.

## 4. Career fairs

Employers come to career fairs looking to find quality applicants. Be one of those quality applicants!

## 5. Local newspaper

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Sometimes going “old school” works! Small and local businesses often advertise job openings in local newspapers. You might also check job posting areas of local newspaper websites.

## 6. Cold calling

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If you’re looking for a job in a specific area or at a particular company, you might simply contact them and ask if they’re hiring. If they’re not, you may still be able to fill out an application for consideration at a later time.

## 7. In person

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Many businesses, especially small ones, advertise job openings on signs in their front window or entryway. If you apply in person, be sure to dress and act professionally. First impressions matter!

## 8. Internship

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Many companies offer internships. These can provide valuable experience, and they often turn into full-time positions.

## 9. Career Services

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A college’s Career Services can connect students and alumni with employment opportunities, provide interview tips, and more.

## 10. Temp agencies

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A temp agency can connect you with job opportunities in your area—and good temp workers are often offered permanent positions.

# Networking

## Tips for Building Professional Connections

At least 70% of job openings are never posted. Why? Because employers are more likely to hire someone they have a connection to rather than a total stranger. So how do you learn about these jobs? Through networking!

Here are some networking tips to help you build professional connections—and find a great job.



### Use existing connections.

Talk to friends, family members, teachers, co-workers, and former bosses. Explain to them what you're looking for. Perhaps you need information on an occupation, or maybe you're seeking a full-time position.



### Use social media.

Make a **LinkedIn** account and add people you know. Then interact with some of their connections by liking or commenting on posts they've shared. You can then add them as connections, and so on. You can also try this with **Facebook** or **Twitter**, but keep it professional.



### Ask for advice.

Most people enjoy providing advice and assistance to those they like. And remember, you're not asking for a handout; you are seeking counsel and advice. *Don't be shy about reaching out to others.*



## **Put yourself out there.**

Take advantage of every opportunity to meet new people and build your network. Attend career fairs and school events, and look for opportunities to meet new people in a professional setting.



## **Nurture the connection.**

Once you connect with someone, it's important to stay connected. Connecting on social media is the easiest way to do that now.

Comment on posts, share articles, and check in every now and then so that others will consider you a valuable connection.

## **What NOT To Do**

Here are a few networking Don'ts.

### **Don't wait for people to come to you.**

It can be hard to put yourself out there if you're more introverted, but if you wait for networking to just happen naturally, you'll likely be left behind. You have to go out of your way to make connections.

### **Don't be insincere.**

If it looks like you're just out to get what you want, no one will want to build a connection with you. Work to forge a genuine connection based on respect and common interests.

### **Don't be unprofessional.**

This is especially important when making connections online. Don't share, comment, or post inappropriate things. Also make sure you have a professional profile picture and email address.

# ORGANIZING YOUR JOB SEARCH

*When you're searching for a job, it's not unusual to be applying for several jobs at the same time. And when you're dealing with multiple applications, it can be easy to miss deadlines, leave out important application materials, or mix up employers because you can't keep track of them all.*

One way to make your job search more successful and less stressful is to be organized. Here are some tips to help you organize your job search.



## Methods of Organization

There are several ways to organize your job search. It doesn't matter which method you choose, as long as it makes sense to you and you're comfortable using it.

- ▶ **Spreadsheet.** If you're familiar with **Excel** or **Google Sheets**, create a spreadsheet with details of your job search.
- ▶ **Website or app.** There are websites and apps specifically designed to help you organize your job search. Some of the most popular ones include **JibberJobber.com** and the **Huntr** app.
- ▶ **Table.** Create a table in **Microsoft Word**.
- ▶ **Job search site.** Sites like **Monster**, **LinkedIn** and **CareerBuilder** have organizational tools to help you keep track of your applications. If you choose this option, make sure you apply to all jobs through the same site.
- ▶ **Pen and paper.** Sometimes the old fashioned way is the easiest!

## Information to Keep

When you're determining what information to keep for each job application, consider including the following:

- ▶ **Company name**
- ▶ **Contact** – the individual to whom you address communications, most likely a manager or someone from human resources. Include relevant contact information such as email address and phone number (with an extension).
- ▶ **Application date** – the date you submitted your application
- ▶ **Application materials** – a list of the documents you submitted, or are required to submit, such as cover letter, resume, and list of references
- ▶ **Follow-ups** – the follow-ups you make, along with the date of each follow-up
- ▶ **Status** – Has your application been received? Have you been invited for an interview? Already interviewed?
- ▶ **Thank you letters** – emails or thank you notes you've sent to an employer after an interview

## Other Tips

- ▶ **Set up job alerts.**  
Use sites like **LinkedIn** and **Monster** to regularly email you job postings that meet your criteria.
- ▶ **Try Google Drive.**  
**Google Drive** can help you keep track of your documents (e.g., resume, cover letters, application spreadsheets, appointment reminders).

# Finding the Right Job

Finding the right job takes time, energy, and sometimes luck. You will save yourself a lot of time and disappointment if you look and apply for jobs that focus on your strengths—and that are also in line with your values.

## What are your strengths?

Consider each of the following and check the column that best describes your ability in that area.

	Good	Average	Poor
<b>Language usage</b> – ability to communicate verbally and in writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Advanced math</b> – able to understand algebra, geometry, and more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Social skills</b> – ability to meet, talk to, and get along with people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Management skills</b> – ability to plan, organize, and implement programs and ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mechanical reasoning</b> – able to understand how things work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Creativity</b> – ability to find new ways to do or say something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Artistic</b> – have talent in music, art, drama, and/or dance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Which is your strongest ability area?**

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# What's important to you?

Think about what you need in order to thrive and be fulfilled in a job or career.

How important is each to you in a career?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Make good money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have regular work hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work inside	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do work that's creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work mostly on my own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do exciting work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work mostly with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work outdoors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be in charge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get along well with co-workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have a good work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do work that's physical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have opportunities for advancement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Look over your responses and choose the top four things you value in a career.

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# What You Need for Job Applications

Companies have different requirements regarding the information and documents needed to complete their job applications. You'll save a lot of time if you have the information you need ready to go. Here's what you need to complete most job applications.



## Personal Info

All applications will likely ask you for your date of birth, address, phone number, email address, and possibly your social security number.

*Note: make sure you have a professional email address for applications.*

## Work History

Applications will ask you for your work history, including job start and stop dates, reasons for leaving, and contact information for previous employers. Be sure to include unpaid jobs and volunteer work.

## Resume and Cover Letter

Applications often give you the option to (or require you to) upload a resume and cover letter. Make sure your resume is up-to-date, proofread, and tailored to that particular position. Your cover letter should also be tailored to the specific position, and addressed to a particular person if possible.

## References

You may need to include contact information for your references, including name, phone number and email address. Be sure to ask permission before you list someone as a reference.



# Job Applications

The job application is often your first chance to make a good impression. Here are some Dos and Don'ts to make sure that your application presents you in the best possible light.

### **DO – sell yourself**

Provide details of your skills and accomplishments, and if you have a resume, letter(s) of recommendations, or examples of relevant work, attach them to your application.

### **DO – fill out everything**

Complete every section. If a question doesn't apply to you, write "NA" or "not applicable."

### **DO – choose references carefully**

Choose references that can attest to your desirable traits, skills, and talents (e.g., technology skills, work ethic). Be sure to ask permission before you list someone as a reference.

### **DO – keep track of applications**

If you're applying to more than one company, keep a list of the places you've applied to, the date you applied, and a contact name.

### **DO – follow up**

If you haven't heard from an employer a week after applying, give them a call or send an email reiterating your interest in the job.

## **DON'T – apply “just because”**

Only apply to jobs you are qualified for—and that meet your criteria.

## **DON'T – volunteer negative info**

When completing applications, you need to answer every question truthfully. However, if there's something on your application that could be seen as a negative, explain how much you've learned and grown from the experience.

## **DON'T – be pushy**

Employers often receive so many applications that they don't have time to follow up on all of them, which means you may never hear back from them. If you don't hear back after you've followed up twice (waiting a week between each), it's best to start applying elsewhere.

## **DON'T – give up**

Applying for jobs can be time consuming—and it can often feel like a job in itself. But don't give up if you don't get called back for interviews, or if you don't hear back at all. It's nothing personal. Just move on and keep trying.

## **If you apply for a job in person...**

Have all the information you need to complete an application with you (education, work experience, references, etc.). Dress professionally and be friendly, confident, and enthusiastic!

# YOUR RESUME

## DOS AND DON'TS

Your resume is a marketing tool that highlights your education, work experience, accomplishments, skills, and talents. The following Dos and Don'ts will help you create a resume that's impressive and professional.

### **DO YOUR RESEARCH.**

Look into how resumes for your career field should be formatted, and what they should include.

### **DO MAKE IT EASY TO READ.**

Use a basic font like Arial or Times New Roman (11-12 point), choose a simple format, and have a good amount of white space on the page.

### **DO TAILOR YOUR RESUME.**

Customize your resume for each job application by adding key words from the job posting.

### **DO HIGHLIGHT RELEVANT HOBBIES.**

Include hobbies or interests that are related to the job (e.g., your interest in fashion for a job at a retail store or your experience with computers for a tech job).

### **DO MAKE IT LOOK PROFESSIONAL.**

Your resume should be attractive, professional looking, and easy for hiring managers to skim. Be sure to proofread it carefully.

### **DO INCLUDE A COVER LETTER.**

Even if it's optional, include a cover letter showcasing your interest in the job.

**DON'T  
JUST USE A  
TEMPLATE.**

Templates are fine to start with, but be sure to tailor your resume to your job and career field.

**DON'T GO  
OVERBOARD  
WITH THE  
DESIGN.**

Avoid using more than one or two fonts or a complicated/confusing format. You want your resume to be easy-to-read at a glance.

**DON'T  
USE  
CLICHES.**

Listing skills like “people person” or “hard worker” are overused and don't tell the employer much about you.

**DON'T  
INCLUDE  
UNRELATED  
HOBBIES.**

If you have hobbies or interests unrelated to the job, or ones that might be seen as very time-consuming, don't include them.

**DON'T GO  
OVER TWO  
PAGES.**

If possible, create a one-page resume. Be concise and selective with the information you choose to include.

**DON'T  
INCLUDE  
REFERENCES.**

References should be separate from your resume. “References available upon request” is also unnecessary.

## **A WORD OF ADVICE**

Don't worry if you don't have a lot of job experience or have a gap in your job history. Think about why you are right for the job and highlight your traits, talents, skills, and/or experiences that make you the perfect candidate for the position.

# COVER LETTER

## DOS AND DON'TS

A cover letter is often your first contact with an employer, so it's very important that it portray you in a positive and professional manner. The following Dos and Don'ts will help you create cover letters that are professional and impressive.

### **DO TAILOR YOUR LETTER.**

Your cover letter should be customized for each job. Research the company and the job so that you can present yourself as the ideal candidate.

### **DO REFERENCE THE JOB.**

Discuss how your skills and experience make you uniquely qualified for the particular job to which you're applying.

### **DO MAKE IT EASY TO READ.**

Use an easy-to-read font, simple language, concise sentences, and short paragraphs. Keep your cover letter to one page.

### **DO USE KEY WORDS.**

Whenever possible, use keywords from the job posting. *Avoid using overused cliches.*

### **DO GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION.**

Explain what job you're applying for, and how you learned of the opening. If you were referred by an employee, mention him/her.

### **DO ALWAYS INCLUDE A LETTER.**

Include a cover letter whenever you send your resume to a potential employer.

## **DON'T USE A GENERIC GREETING.**

Avoid “to whom it may concern.” Contact the company and ask for the name and/or title of the person your resume and cover letter should be addressed to.

## **DON'T JUST SUMMA- RIZE YOUR RESUME.**

The cover letter is your opportunity to showcase your personality, soft skills, and other traits not fully captured by your resume. Use this opportunity to your advantage.

## **DON'T GET TOO COM- PLICATED.**

Employers dedicate a varying amount of time to reading cover letters. Be concise and compelling.

## **DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT YOURSELF.**

Focus on what you can contribute to the company—not what they can do for you. *“I believe that my customer service experience and communication skills will make me an asset to your company.”*

## **DON'T FORGET TO PROOFREAD.**

Make sure your cover letter doesn't include misspellings, grammatical errors, or smudges. Proofread!

## **DON'T BE ORDINARY.**

Employers read lots of cover letters. Have a strong opening and closing. *Have a cover letter that stands out.*

## **A WORD OF ADVICE**

Don't worry if you don't have a lot of job experience or have a gap in your job history. Think about why you are right for the job and highlight your traits, talents, skills, and/or experiences that make you the perfect candidate for the position.

# PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW



You landed an interview! Congratulations! Now it's time to prepare. Do the following to help ensure that you have a great interview.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Research the company, as well as the position for which you will be interviewing. Check out the company's website, and learn about their products and services. Use this information to figure out how you would answer the question, "*Why are you interested in working here?*"

## PLAN YOUR ANSWERS

There are a number of common questions that are often asked in interviews. Some examples include: *Why do you feel you're qualified for this position? What are your greatest strengths? Your weaknesses? How would you describe yourself?*

Practice your answers to these and other common interview questions. Also be prepared to talk about your education, interests, previous job experience (paid and unpaid), and goals.

## FIGURE OUT LOGISTICS

Look up the address of the interview location, as well as how to get there. Plan to leave early enough to get to your interview 10 minutes early.

## DOS AND DON'TS ON WHAT TO BRING

Bring three copies of your resume, a notepad, and a pen. Don't bring a water bottle, an oversized purse, or another person. And before you walk into the interview, silence your phone.

## LOOK YOUR BEST

If you walk into an interview knowing that you look good, you'll feel a lot more confident. Taking care with your appearance also shows an interviewer that this is important to you.

*To make sure you look your best, do the following.*

- Take care of the basics – hair washed and styled, hands and nails clean, teeth clean, and breath fresh.
- Don't wear strong perfume or cologne.
- If you wear jewelry, keep it simple.
- Make sure your shoes look professional and are free of scuffs and dirt.
- Keep any makeup subtle and simple.
- Cover visible tattoos (if possible).
- Try on your interview outfit ahead of time to make sure it fits properly and has no stains, tears, or missing buttons.

*You'd be surprised how a wrinkled shirt or stained tie can sabotage a qualified applicant's job chances. You have one chance to make a first impression!*

## PLAN YOUR QUESTIONS

Most interviews end with the interviewer asking if you have any questions. Asking intelligent questions can be very impressive. It's also a good way for you to find out if a job is right for you. Here are a few ideas:

- ▶ What do people like most about working here?
- ▶ Are there opportunities for advancement?
- ▶ When do you think you'll make a hiring decision?

*Note: Do not ask about pay, vacations, or bonuses until you're offered the job.*

# Interview Questions



While all jobs and companies are different, there are a few types of questions that employers often ask during interviews. Learn about these types of questions, and think about how you might answer them at your own interview.

## Getting to Know You

Most interviews include a few questions designed to get to know you—and to see if you'd be a good fit for the company. Here are a few examples.

- ▶ What are your biggest strengths? Weaknesses?
- ▶ How would you describe yourself?
- ▶ Why are you interested in this position?

*When asked about weaknesses, come up with something that can be seen as a positive. For example, "I really enjoy meeting new people and sometimes I spend more time talking to customers than I should."*

## Skills-Based Questions

Skills-based interview questions pertain to your ability to do the job for which you're interviewing. For instance, someone interviewing for a retail position might be asked questions like, *What kind of experience do you have maintaining inventory?* or *What kind of customer service experience do you have?* Before any interview, look up skills-based questions common for that career field.

## Behavioral Questions

Behavioral questions ask you how you have handled work-related situations in the past. These questions help the interviewer understand certain traits and soft skills you might have, such as trustworthiness, communication, and problem-solving.

The following are some examples of common behavioral-type interview questions.

- ▶ Tell me about a time you dealt with a challenging situation.
- ▶ Tell me about a goal you set and achieved.
- ▶ Talk about a time you made a mistake.

When answering behavioral questions, remember **STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result**. First, describe the background, such as where you were working at the time. Then clearly describe the task you were faced with. Next, talk about what you did—and then discuss the (preferably positive) end results. If the end result wasn't positive, talk about how much you learned from the experience.

## Situational Questions

Situational questions give interviewers insights into how you would handle hypothetical work-related situations. Here are some examples.

- ▶ What would you do if you were asked to perform a task you'd never done before?
- ▶ How would you handle an angry customer?
- ▶ How would you handle receiving criticism from a boss or co-worker?
- ▶ What would you do if you weren't satisfied with an aspect of your job?

# Interview Follow-Up Dos and Don'ts

So you've completed your job interview. Now what? The period of time directly after your interview can play a crucial role in landing the job you want.

Here you'll find Dos and Don'ts on what you can do after an interview to impress any employer.

**Do** send a thank you note. Handwritten is best, but if that won't work, an email will suffice. Thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

**Do** use your thank you note to reiterate your interest in the position and to briefly highlight your skills. Keep your thank you note short and concise.

**Do** follow up again if you haven't heard back within a week or two. You might send a follow-up email asking if they need anything else from you.

**Do** alert your references that you have completed an interview, and that they may be contacted. Remind them of the job and your potential role.

**Do** be patient. Companies often need a certain amount of time to complete their interviews, contact references, and consider their decision.

**Do** connect with your interviewer on **LinkedIn**. Even if you don't get hired, keep the potential connection going. You never know where your next job lead might come from.

**Don't** forget to thank each interviewer individually. If you were interviewed by more than one person, send each a personalized thank you note.

**Don't** have any spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors in written follow-ups. Written follow-ups should be proofread, polished, and professional.

**Don't** be too aggressive or persistent. If you have not heard back after two or three follow-ups, start focusing your job hunt elsewhere.

**Don't** burn any bridges. If you don't get the job, accept it gracefully. They may consider you for a position later. Always impress others with your professionalism.

**Don't** stop your job search. Even if you feel really good about an interview, keep your job search going.

**Don't** get discouraged. Sometimes you never hear back after an interview. You might not know why you didn't get the job, or what you could have done differently.

While this can be discouraging, it's extremely common. Just tell yourself that it wasn't meant to be and keep looking!

**TOP 10**

# Ways to Get the Most Out of Career Fairs

*A career or job fair is an opportunity for you to impress recruiters and employers with your preparation, confidence, and enthusiasm. Here are ten tips to help you prepare for, and get the most out of, a career or job fair.*

## 1. Find out who will be there

If you're able, find out which employers will be there. You can then research the companies and make a list of the employers you definitely want to talk to.

## 2. Fine tune your resume

Use this opportunity to polish, update, and tailor your resume to include things that will impress the employers you want to see.

## 3. Print your resume

Print hard copies of your resume to hand out to employers. Have a folder to carry your resumes, and pen and paper for notes. Make sure your resumes stay flat, neat, and professional looking.

## 4. Dress to impress

Select an outfit to wear that's comfortable, stylish, and appropriate for the industry you're trying to get into. Dress like you're going for an interview. Be sure to try on and clean your outfit before the day of the fair. And finally, make sure your shoes are comfortable to walk and stand in.

## 5. Make a list of questions

Once you figure out which employers you want to see, come up with a list of specific questions you want to ask them. Asking intelligent questions will make you appear engaged and prepared.

## 6. Rehearse your elevator pitch

Your elevator pitch is a short speech that quickly sums up who you are and your professional goals. Practice it so it sounds natural and engaging.

## 7. Arrive early

Arrive early enough to make sure you see everyone you want to see. This will also make you appear eager and enthusiastic to employers.

## 8. Be confident

As you approach each table, smile. Be friendly and confident. Introduce yourself, give your elevator pitch, and go with the flow. A career fair is not the time to be shy and withdrawn.

## 9. Take action

If you engage with an employer and are interested in the company, take action. Ask if you can complete an application or come in for an interview.

## 10. Follow up

Gather contact information for each employer you speak to and follow up with a thank you note. Thank them for their time, and remind them of your interest in their company. Make yourself stand out!

# Internships

Job postings often state “1-2 years of work experience preferred.” Even when experience isn’t preferred or required, college students and recent graduates often find themselves competing with experienced candidates.

The solution, of course, is to obtain relevant work experience before you enter the job market. *That’s where an internship comes in.*

## What is an internship?

An internship allows you to “test drive” a career. It’s a temporary job that provides an inside look at an occupation, company, and industry—while helping you determine if a prospective career is right for you.

## Do internships pay?

Some internships pay, and some do not. But it’s important to remember that whether or not an internship pays doesn’t impact the quality of the internship opportunity.

## Are all internships the same?

No! Some companies and businesses use interns for “cheap labor,” giving them menial tasks that do not contribute to their professional skill set. Ideally, an internship should provide you with relevant work experience, and give you the opportunity to improve your skills.

## Landing an Internship

Looking to find an the internship that will be right for you? Check out the tips below to get started.

- ▶ **Consider your interests and qualifications.** Think about what kind of internship is going to be a good fit for your skills, experience, and interests—and about what kind of internship will help you achieve your career goals.
- ▶ **Start early.** Many internship sites recruit and hire summer interns as early as late fall.
- ▶ **Think broadly.** Don't narrow your focus too much. Internships are about exploring and gaining experience in an area of interest.
- ▶ **Network.** Make sure the people in your network know that you are looking for an internship.
- ▶ **Go online.** Websites like [Internships.com](http://Internships.com), [Glassdoor.com](http://Glassdoor.com), and [LinkedIn.com](http://LinkedIn.com) are great places to start your internship search.

*Many organizations use their internship programs as a means of screening and preparing students for full-time positions upon graduation. In fact, it's common for organizations to offer full-time positions to their most successful interns.*

**Remember...there are many valuable and relevant non-internship positions out there as well. For instance, a prospective social worker might volunteer at a local social service agency. A budding web designer could develop a freelance web-development business. Find what works for you.**

# DRESS FOR SUCCESS

## A GUIDE TO BUSINESS ATTIRE

*Whether you're interviewing for a job or following a dress code set by your employer, appearances matter! It always pays to look your best!*

### WHAT IS BUSINESS ATTIRE?

Business attire is whatever you are expected to wear at a job. What's considered appropriate attire varies from industry to industry, and job to job; however, there are a few standards that apply no matter where you work.

### TYPES OF BUSINESS ATTIRE

Business attire can range from very formal to very casual, depending on the business and situation. Here is a quick reference guide to the different types of business attire.

- ▶ **CASUAL:** Casual business attire can be described as most people's everyday wardrobe. This can include jeans, T-shirts, or open-toed shoes, though when worn in a business setting, these clothes should still be clean and in good shape.
- ▶ **SMART CASUAL:** Smart casual dress is similar to Casual in its flexibility, but with a "step up" in neatness. For instance, smart casual dress may include jeans with a button down shirt rather than a T-shirt.
- ▶ **BUSINESS CASUAL:** This is the most common type of business attire. Business casual often includes dress pants (khakis or slacks) or skirts, button down or collared shirts, and closed-toed shoes. Business casual is a safe choice if you're not sure about the dress code.

- ▶ **BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL:** Business professional attire is common in businesses that have a stricter dress code. Business professional attire typically includes a suit and tie for men and a suit or blazer and blouse with slacks or skirt for women.
- ▶ **BUSINESS FORMAL:** Similar to “black tie,” business formal dress is typically reserved for formal settings, such as award ceremonies, galas, and other evening events.

## DRESSING FOR AN INTERVIEW

When you’re dressing for a job interview and aren’t sure of the dress code, it’s generally best to err on the side of formality. This typically means business professional attire, though in many industries, business casual is acceptable. Casual and smart casual are never acceptable for interviews.

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS DON'TS

- ▶ Don’t wear too much jewelry or make-up.
- ▶ Don’t wear clothes that are tight, revealing, or suggestive.
- ▶ Don’t wear too much perfume or cologne.
- ▶ Don’t wear clothes with controversial messages.

## WHEN IN DOUBT, FOLLOW THE CROWD.

Observe how others in the workplace dress, and apply your own style and preferences to this type of dress. If you’re looking to move up in the company, pay attention to how those in the levels to which you aspire dress, and make an effort to look the part.

# What Are Employers Looking For?

What employers look for in a candidate varies from industry to industry, and from job to job. There are, however, a few common traits and soft skills that most employers look for.

*Which ones do you have?*

**Problem-solving skills:** Employers want employees who can confidently take on a challenge and figure out the best way to tackle it without getting discouraged.

**Ambition:** Having plans and goals for the future tells employers that an applicant values growth and hard work.

**Digital literacy:** More than just computer skills (although they're important), digital literacy means anything from being comfortable doing research online to being able to quickly learn whatever software or apps the company regularly uses.

**Leadership skills:** Being able to motivate others, take initiative, and make smart decisions are qualities employers value and look for.

**Flexibility:** Employers want employees who are able to adapt to different situations, tasks, and people. Being flexible means being comfortable with change and open to new ideas.



**Communication skills:** All jobs require communication skills, and employers are looking for people who are good at listening, speaking, writing, negotiating, and providing customer service. Employees with these skills are also typically the ones who advance through the ranks.

**Cultural competence:** We live in an increasingly diverse society, and job applicants are at a distinct advantage when they can demonstrate their knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse peoples, cultures, and values.

**Good character:** Having good character means being the type of person others can rely on, and want to be around. Examples of character traits employers often look for include:

- ▶ Dependability
- ▶ Respectfulness
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Honesty
- ▶ Optimism
- ▶ Self-control

**Think about it!** Which traits and skills do you need to develop further? What can you do to develop them?

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# Elevator Pitch

**An elevator pitch is a quick synopsis of your background, skills, accomplishments, and goals. A good elevator pitch lasts no longer than a 30-second elevator ride.**

With regard to job hunting, an elevator pitch allows you to introduce yourself to recruiters and employers in a clear and confident manner.

Here are tips for writing your own elevator pitch.

## **Give a brief background.**

Consider what information will be the most interesting and relevant to your listener (e.g., your education, work experience), and give a quick recap of who you are.

## **Share your skills.**

Focus on what you excel at and how your skills will help the company reach their goals. These can be soft skills (e.g., problem solving, communication) and/or hard skills (e.g., social media, programming, writing).

## **Mention your goals.**

These don't need to be specific, but they should be goals you can achieve at their company. For example, "I'm looking for an opportunity to use my marketing skills to help a business grow."

## **Here's an example.**

My name is Claire, and I just graduated from Great Oak University with a degree in English. I was the editor-in-chief for the Great Oak University newspaper and I've maintained my own blog for five years. Both have helped me build my knowledge of publishing. I'm now looking for an opportunity to use my print and digital media skills in the business world.



# Benefits Basics



*Benefits are “perks” employers offer to attract and keep quality employees. Benefits vary from job to job, so when you’re looking for employment, it’s important to know which benefits are the most important to you.*

## Common Types of Benefits

While benefits vary, the following are the most common full-time job benefits.

- ▶ **Health insurance** is a common benefit offered by employers; however, health insurance plans are not all the same. Plans vary greatly in what they cover, and in the percentage of the cost companies pay. If health insurance is important to you, find out if a prospective employer offers this benefit, and if they do, find out what it covers and what you’re required to pay.
- ▶ **Paid time off (PTO)** is a bank of days employees can use for vacation, illness, and/or personal time. For example, a full-time employee may be given 15 paid days off a year, in addition to the holidays observed by the company.
- ▶ **Short- and long-term disability** benefits provide employees with a percentage of their salary if they are injured or ill and can no longer do their job.
- ▶ **Retirement plans** are a common benefit. For example, if your employer offers a 401(k) plan, you can invest part of your wages in a retirement account. There are tax advantages and sometimes employers will match your contribution—which is like getting free money.

## Other Types of Benefits

Though not as common as health insurance, PTO, and retirement plans, the following benefits are sometimes offered to attract quality employees and increase employee morale.

- ▶ **Working from home** options are becomingly increasingly common.
- ▶ **Dental and vision insurance** are often offered as part of a company's health insurance plan.
- ▶ **Recreation activities** and **free food and coffee** are common workplace perks.
- ▶ While larger companies must offer 12 weeks of unpaid **maternity/paternity leave**, some employers offer paid time off.
- ▶ To encourage employees to continue their education in industry-related fields, some employers offer **tuition assistance**.
- ▶ Employers often provide employees with a small amount of **life insurance**.

## Consider Benefits Carefully

Many jobs list the benefits they provide in their job posting, while some jobs offer a more comprehensive list only after extending a job offer to an applicant. When you're looking for the right job, it's important to know what benefits are important to you, and which are just a plus.

What benefits are most important to you?

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# Your Digital Footprint



According to a survey by CareerBuilder, 70% of employers check a job candidate's social media and online presence, with 54% reporting that they have rejected a candidate based on something they found.

This is why it's important to leverage your digital footprint for your benefit, and to never give an employer a reason to disqualify you.

## Be smart about what you post.

To the casual observer, your posts online lack context and largely speak for themselves—so choose what you post carefully.

Here are some simple rules to keep in mind.

- ▶ **Be extra polite online.** People can't see your expression or hear your tone of voice, so what you say can easily be misunderstood.
- ▶ **Avoid "racy" or party photos.** While your personal life is your own, you never want to give an employer a reason not to hire you. Go with the "Grandparent Rule." If you wouldn't want a grandparent to see it, don't post it. This goes for tagged photos as well.
- ▶ **Avoid controversy.** As you probably know, the internet is a breeding ground for conversation on hot-button issues. Avoid posting controversial statements or opinions—you can't know how they will be viewed by prospective employers. They could raise a "red flag" and keep you from being considered for a job you would like to have.

## Put your best self out there.

Oftentimes, having no online presence raises questions for employers as well. That's why it's important to use your online presence as a way to highlight your achievements and talents. Here are some ideas.

- ▶ **Have a professional profile.** If you don't already have a **LinkedIn** account, create one. Make sure it's up-to-date, professional, and includes everything about you that you'd want an employer to know. Join online groups that highlight your interests and passions—this is a great opportunity to show employers who you are.

There are also privacy settings on **LinkedIn**, allowing your profile to appear on search engine results for your name. Ensure this setting is turned on so that if anyone "Googles" you, the first thing they see is your professional profile.

- ▶ **Be smart with privacy settings.** Consider making privacy settings on certain social media posts public, especially if they highlight positive things you've done (volunteer work, personal or professional accomplishments, etc.). You want to show employers who you are—and that you are the type of employee they want.
- ▶ **Keep it polished.** In your professional and public posts and profiles, make sure everything is proofread and free of misspellings and grammatical mistakes. Treat your **LinkedIn** profile like an extension of your resume—update and edit it often.