

Job Search Basics

How do you find work? “Work” being a way for you to earn money while you go to school full time; a “job,” in other words, as opposed to a “career.” Here are some suggestions on where to look for a job and how to fill in an application. That’s it – short and sweet. The questions, by the way, come directly from you. They’re what YOU wanted to know.

Where do I look for a job?

Part-time work is harder to come by than ever before. Think about what kind of organizations and businesses need workers, and apply everywhere! If you really set your mind to it and think outside the box, you might be surprised at what you come up with.

Try these places:

- Your school’s financial aid office. Federal work-study can be part of your financial aid package, and what is better than an on-campus job work with and for your classmates?
- Your school’s career center. Career centers often have lists of currently available part-time jobs in the community. Get to know the staff; be friendly and enthusiastic and you’ll find them to be very helpful.
- Your academic department. Professors may have research projects, or know of outside research projects, which are perfect for a favored student. (Why are you a favored student? Well, because you always go to and participate in class, you ask questions, you’re polite and call your professor by name, and you meet with him or her during office hours.)
- The academic center. They often need tutors, and whether you’re an A student in biology, chemistry, Spanish or English – whatever the subject, somebody needs your expertise. The academic center may also have a bulletin board where you can advertise your services.
- Temporary agencies. Temp agencies often have terrific jobs, and offer you the flexibility to work only the days and times that suit your changing schedule. And a job from a temp agency can sometimes turn into a permanent job – even a career-type of job.
- The local Career One-Stop. These federal resources are an excellent place to start a job search, and they can help with resumes, interview skills and workforce development training as well. Go to <http://www.servicelocator.org/> to find the one near your community.
- Online. Check out your community’s website, through the chamber of commerce. Visit trade association sites, job search sites, and, a great one for part-time work, www.snagajob.com. Craigslist, of course, has lots of jobs and “gigs.”
- The local government. Community centers, swimming pools, libraries, schools –public services need part time employees. Visit them individually, or see if there’s a centralized job bank.
- The local newspaper. Your *Sun Gazette* or *Community Merchandiser* may list good part-time jobs in local offices. Small-time entrepreneurs, such as caterers, party-planners, personal organizers and day care providers also often advertise for help in the “local rag.”
- Bulletin boards. Part time jobs are often found on bulletin boards. What bulletin boards?

- The library (school and public)
- The grocery store
- The student center
- Your church (heck, other people's churches too)
- The gym
- The specialty store (huh? Music stores, pet shops, coffee shops, bookstores – specialty shops often have community bulletin boards where people not only offer their services, but seek services as well.)
- While you're staring at the bulletin boards, take a second to pin up your own ad – advertise your own services for babysitting, dog-walking, odd jobs, tutoring, whatever you can and want to do!
- Door-to-door. Cruise the mall, cruise your neighborhood, cruise the business district. If you have transportation, go further afield to the next neighborhood or the mall one town over. Even if you don't see a "help wanted" sign in a shop, ask to speak with the manager and hand over a copy of your resume. Put on your most professional, enthusiastic face and maybe you can win them over!
- Network. Networking is HUGE. Tell everyone you know – everyone! – that you're looking for a job. Be prepared to say what you can do in a few memorable words. You might also consider printing up business cards (so quick, easy and inexpensive these days), showing your name, phone number and email address along with your most important skills/talents/experience. Once you've got them, hand 'em out freely!
- Go where the jobs are. Visit construction sites, see if there's a moving company in your neighborhood and drop by in the early morning when trucks are headed out (they often need casual labor to load furniture), stop by the local motels and ask about front-desk jobs. Use your imagination! Anywhere there's a business, there are people working.

Are there different approaches to applying for different types of jobs?

Yes, of course there are. Duh. ☺ Landing a job at McDonald's involves an interview and a handshake; getting your dream position with Microsoft takes months or much longer of preparation, interviews and probably even aptitude tests and other examinations. Here, though, we'll just talk about some basic things you should do to be prepared to apply for and interview for ANY kind of job; the lowest common denominator, so to speak.

- Update your email address. It's time to get rid of skankinpunk@gmail.com (I didn't make that up; it's my daughter's high school email address) and change to firstname.lastname@gmail.com. Believe me, if your liberal scholarship/ETV program frowns on questionable email addresses, prospective bosses often won't even respond to them at all!
- Update your voicemail. Enough of that, "Hello?! ... oh, hey, fooled you I'm not really here," stuff. Enough loud music that only you and your closest friends like. Your message should say something like, "You've reached Sarah Brown. Please leave your name and number and I'll call you back at my earliest convenience. Thank you!"

- If necessary, clean up your facebook or myspace. Many bosses check potential employees' social network pages and won't hire people who display rude, lewd or inappropriate photographs, statuses or conversations.
- As suggested above, invest in business cards. They can be really inexpensive and easy to produce, and it's good to have something professional to hand out.
- Line up your references. Talk to two or three people who would be willing to speak on your behalf to prospective employers. These should be people who know you from an academic, job or coaching/mentoring standpoint, so that they can talk about your work ethic, your leadership qualities, your sense of responsibility, and the other things that are important to a boss. Make sure you have good contact information for each of these people.
- Prepare your resume and a generic cover letter. We'll talk about these things in more detail another day, but in the meantime just know that you can ask for advice at your school's career center, at the One Stop Center, or you can even – any time! – ask OFA to look at your resume.
- Look at your wardrobe. As somebody said, “No one was ever not hired for looking too professional.” For an interview even at a grocery store or on a construction site, you need clean, pressed clothing that doesn't look like you slept in it three days running. (We know you; we've got kids at home too!)

Those are the basics. If you have professional contact information, a good resume, reliable references and something neat to wear, you're ready to apply for jobs.

How do you fill in a job application?

Employment applications, whether on paper or online, generally require the same basic information. Keep your resume handy and you should have most of the information you need to complete a basic job application.

Personal Information

- Name
- Complete address
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Proof of eligibility to work in the U.S. – *you may be asked to provide your driver's license, social security card, birth certificate, passport or naturalization papers. If you're not a U.S. citizen, you may to show your work visa.*
- Felony convictions – *hopefully you can just answer “no,” or “none.” Be aware, however, that many employers run a background check.*

Education

- Schools/colleges attended
- Major
- Degree/diploma
- (Anticipated) graduation date

Position Applied For Information

- Title of the job you are applying for – *apply for a specific position, like “clerk,” or “server.” Don’t leave this blank or put something vague like, “I’ll do anything.”*
- Desired salary/wage – put “negotiable,” or “open.”
- Hours/days available to work
- When you can start work

Employment Information

- Names, addresses, phone numbers of previous employers
- Previous supervisors’ names
- Dates of employment
- Salary/wage
- Reason for leaving – *it is very important that you put something positive here, like, “moved,” “seasonal work,” “returned to school,” or “sought a job with more responsibility.” NEVER use words such “quit,” or “fired.”*

References

- Names, job title or relationship, addresses, phone numbers

When completing an application by hand, bear in mind the following:

- Read the directions and follow them!
- Check your spelling
- Try to write it right the first time – don’t cross things out
- Use block print letters
- Make sure you answer all questions
- Make sure you apply for a specific position
- Explain any gaps in employment history
- Sign and date the application

Personality/suitability tests

We copied a document (word for word!) from www.ehow.com, on understanding and passing personality/suitability tests. It’s attached. ☺

I’ve turned in the application – now what?

The short answer here, is STAY ON IT. Follow up. Get the name of the manager and call back in about three days. Stop by in a week. If you’re really interested in the job, stand out from the crowd by clearly showing your interest. Keep buggin’ them until you get an interview, or they tell you the job’s been filled.

~ Good luck! ~