



Getting Your Job Start

For most people, landing a paid, full-time job is the key step to becoming financially independent and self-sufficient. Here are some tips for launching a successful search:

- **Don't wait.** Even if your family is supporting you now and your financial needs are being met, be realistic about how soon you'll need to take responsibility for your own expenses. Remember that it's never too early to begin your search. The earlier you start, the more time you'll have to find a job you want. If you're in school now, you can initiate the job search process several years before you graduate: consider what industries and types of jobs interest you, interview people in various occupations, and research specific companies.
- **Adopt a plan.** An effective job search is usually not a once in awhile, hit-or-miss effort; it takes an organized approach. Talk to career counselors at your school and look for job-hunting advice online and in guidebooks. Determine what your job search process will be and follow-through on your plan.
- **Make time to search.** Set aside some time every month or every week to focus on your job search. By starting your search when you're still in school, you can hopefully avoid landing on your own in need of money, feeling pressure to take any paid work that comes along. If you're already in a job but aren't enjoying it, set aside time for an organized search. It will help keep you focused on creating a brighter future.
- **Be proactive.** Explore as many avenues as you can. The more options you have, the better your prospects become. If you're in college, look through your school's job postings; register with employment agencies and attend career fairs; visit companies' Web sites to look for employment opportunities; post your resume on online job sites and actively search for opportunities on them; scan classified ads in newspapers and trade magazines.
- **Network.** Make contact with others through alumni groups and trade associations. Network with family, friends, teachers, and colleagues. Don't be shy about asking for help to open the door to new opportunities.
- **Discover yourself along the way.** Some people are fortunate to have a clear idea of jobs and careers that interest them, while others don't. Don't let the lack of a clear vision stop you from moving forward. Look at your job search as a process of self-discovery, because it is. As you search, talk with people in different industries and professions and visit their work sites if you can. Ask them questions about how they got into the field and what their experience has been. You'll begin to get a sense of which opportunities you find exciting—and which environments you'd rather avoid. The process of searching will help you bring your personal goals into sharper focus.
- **Apply your skills and talents.** While you're searching for your "ideal" job, you may need part-time or short-term work to cover your expenses. Consider what skills and talents you have that might be marketable, whether it's building Web sites, tutoring students, installing audio equipment, cooking, or carpentry. Meet with one or more temporary job agencies and submit your resume. They can help you find short-term jobs that can both bring in cash and add to your job experience.

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