

Landing the Job: Tips and Tools for Job Search Success

► Looking for a job can be one of the most exciting and challenging processes people go through during their working lives. Here are some quick tips to help you get started in your job search.

Launch a Successful Job Search

Before You Start

There are a few things you should think through before searching for a job. First, think about what type of job you are looking for. There are all kinds of job openings you can consider. Here are a few questions to help you decide which types of jobs will be the best fit for you and your needs.

- Are you interested in working full time or part time?
- Are short term positions an option or would you prefer a job you can work for a longer term?
- Do you need this job to pay the bills or are you looking for a job that meets your current and future career goals?

Once you determine the big picture elements of what your ideal job should look like, think about what day-to-day elements of the job match your needs and interests best. Here are a few things to consider.

- How important is it for your job to match your interests and skills?
- How far are you willing to commute? Are you willing to travel farther to a job that matches your interests and skills?
- Will the job's working requirements meet your physical abilities? Are the job's work hours doable with your current schedule and responsibilities?

Start Your Search

Now that you have decided what your job and work-related requirements look like, you are ready to begin your search. Visit online job search websites and local area job search sites to find jobs that match your needs. These websites often allow you to search jobs based on location, full or part time hours, salary/hourly wage,



and by employer/industry type. Some jobs are posted in area newspapers, social media, and other local informational providers too. If you prefer to speak with someone in person about job opportunities in your area, visit your local career center. You can also visit <https://alabamaworks.alabama.gov/>.

Use Your Network

People often connect to jobs through family members, friends, and others by sharing their job search interests. Using social media sites to share your job search interests can also help your search interests reach deeper into your network and beyond.

If you find a job that interests you, but you would like to learn more about the employer before applying, do some homework! Check out their website online or request an informational interview. Informational interviews allow potential employees the opportunity to ask questions to learn more about the employer, the types of jobs people do there, and what jobs are currently available.

Complete the Job Application

Once you have identified several jobs of interest, you will need to get your job applications submitted to be considered for the job. Many job applications require a completed application form, a resume, and references to be considered complete. Others may require cover letters, school transcripts, proof of certifications/training, drug screens and other items as well.

Here are a few tips and helpful steps you can take to make sure your job applications are completed fully and grab the attention of the hiring manager.

Before filling out the job application, you should review the job posting and application. Make a list of everything the employer wants you to submit for your application to be considered complete. As you get those items together, check them off your list. Create a list for each job you are applying for as different employers may want different things.

The job application can be easy to fill out. Many job applications can be filled out online while others may require a paper version. Before completing the application, read the whole application and the job description before filling it out. This will help minimize mistakes as you fill out the application.

Fill out the job application completely based on the directions provided. If you have a question about something asked on the job application, contact the potential employer's Human Resources contact or the hiring manager.

Job applications often ask for the same kinds of information found on your resume and your references. Consider preparing your resume and references list first so the application will be easier to complete.

Check the document for spelling and grammar errors. You also need to check to make sure the information on the job application matches any other application materials you are submitting as well as dates of previous employment, job titles, job duties, certification/graduation dates, and others. You may consider writing any answers in a software program with spell and grammar check to make sure you minimize making a mistake you might not catch. If you use this strategy, be careful when you copy and paste your responses into the application.

Make sure you have all of the application materials needed before submitting.

After Submitting the Application

Follow up! Check with the potential employer to make sure everything that was necessary for a complete application has been received.

Keep track of your job applications and where you stand in the process.

Until you find a job, keep looking, searching, and applying. Considering one job possibility at a time may delay your job search.

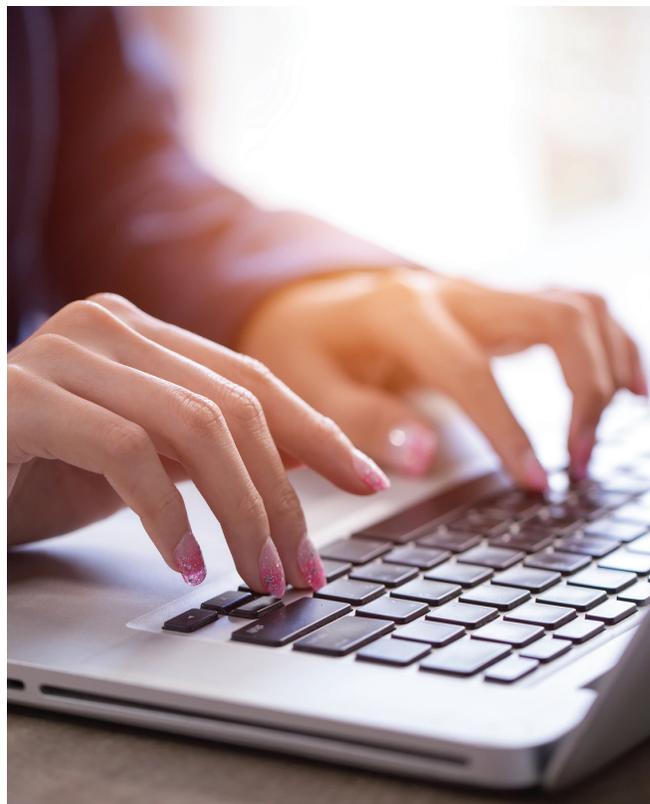
Create a Stand Out Cover Letter

► A cover letter is an introduction of a job seeker's skills and interests. A stand out cover letter convinces employers to look at a candidate's resume and offer an interview.

Just as with a resume, there is no one size fits all for a cover letter. A cover letter must be specific to the job. The cover letter must show knowledge of the position and required skills and their connection to goals of the organization. The goal of the cover letter is to secure the interview.

Components of a Cover Letter

- **Name and contact information.** For both applicant and recipient
 - Full legal name
 - Current phone number
 - Current address
 - Email address (professional email address; no nicknames)
- **Salutation.** This may require a little research. Be specific in addressing the appropriate individual in the cover letter. Avoid using blanket salutations such as "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Hiring Manager." Researching company websites could assist in locating this information.
- **Body.** The body of a cover letter should clearly state its purpose with clear specification of the position the applicant is seeking. Remember the goal is to stand out from other applicants.
 - **Create interest.** Demonstrate accomplishment, passion, or excitement created by relevant skills that would improve organizational success.
 - State the position of interest and where/how you learned of the opening.
 - **Sell yourself.** Highlight skills and accomplishments listed on the resume. Demonstrate relevance of skills and accomplishments as they individually address each position. Include additional skills that may be a bonus in creating success for the organization and its goals. List achievements and successes in numerical values. Provide examples showing value added with utilization of your skills.
 - **Connect skills and achievements to the position.** Demonstrate the connection as a solution to organizational challenges and concerns. Reference how these skills and achievements assist in presenting you as an asset to the organization.
- **Request for an interview.** The closing paragraph should directly request an interview as an opportunity for more discussion.
- **Closing.** Use a professional closing such as Sincerely, or Best Regards.
- **Signature.** Sign the letter in blue or black ink. It can be scanned if submitting electronically
- **Enclosure.** Indicate that there is an attachment. A cover letter will always be accompanied by a resume



Tips to Remember

- Always write a cover letter unless the employer specifically says not to.
- A cover letter should be **easy to read**.
 - Use standard 1-inch margins.
 - Make sure it is not longer than 1 page.
 - Use a standard 12-pt font such as Times New Roman or Arial.
 - Use 1-inch margins.
- The format of the cover letter should match that of the accompanying resume
- **Editing is vital.** Make sure your cover letter is free of grammatical and spelling errors; perfection is the goal; cover letters with errors end in resumes that are often overlooked
- **Use keywords.** Include action verbs and keywords from the job description; pull out specific qualifications required for the position as listed in the job posting and use those terms referencing your skills

Electronic Cover Letters

Employers often request electronic submission of resumes and cover letters within the application. Traditionally formatted documents become distorted when submitted electronically. Adjustments must be incorporated to accommodate electronic requests.

- Only use plain text.
- Do not bold, underline, or italicize.
- Do not use bullets; use hyphens or asterisks.
- Left align all text.
- Save as .txt or .doc format.
- All fonts should be the same size.
- No borders.

Create a Job Winning Resume

► The key to getting an interview is to create a job-winning resume.

Determine the type of job and remember resumes do not come in one-size fits all. Your resume should be tailored to the job.

Choose a Resume Style

There are several different resume styles. The style you chose is determined by your intent.

- The **chronological resume** is the most commonly used resume style. In the chronological resume, employment experienced is listed in chronological order by date with the most recent employment listed first. This is the style used when there are no gaps in employment and a strong work history.
- The **skills based or functional resume** is a resume style used when the goal is to change industries and there is limited work experience. This resume style focuses on skills. This is an opportunity to draw attention to skills relevant to the position and not the gaps in employment or length of employment on a job.
- The **combination resume** focuses on job skills as well as employment history. This resume style is most beneficial in changing industry. It allows opportunity to highlight skills obtained possibly through sources other than previous employment; yet, also allows focus on strong/consistent work history.

Components of a Resume

- Name and contact information
 - Full legal name
 - Current phone number
 - Current address
 - Email address (professional email address—no nicknames)
- Skills and accomplishments may be obtained through various methods such as volunteer work, extracurricular activities, and hobbies; not just employment
- Hard skills are skills gained through training. They are skills that are quantifiable and verifiable.
- Soft skills are skills not obtained through education and training, but more relative to personality traits. Skills that pertain to character aspects as communication, attitude, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. These skills are highly transferable.
- Relative skills acquired above and beyond career/work related experience
- Any accomplishments demonstrating use of skills to create success
- Recognitions for success obtained with skills outside of routine duties (both career and non-career)
- Experience consists of all career experience. Include volunteering and extracurricular activities.
- Brief description of activities and duties provided routinely as well as outside of daily expectations.
- Education/training includes all certification, degrees and specialized training relevant to the position
- Summary statement giving a description of who you are as a potential employer. Provides supporting details for you as an appropriate candidate for employment.



Resume Don'ts

- Do not include your age.
- Do not include your marital status.
- Do not include parental status.
- Do not exaggerate information.
- Do not include photographs.

Tips to Remember

- Keep your resume simple and clean. Organize information under headings.
- Be sure your resume is well organized.
- Use a standard 11 or 12 pt font.
- Use 1-inch margins.
- Use black ink.
- Use white or ivory paper. No color or scented paper.
- Make sure your resume is free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- Keep length to a maximum of 2 pages.
- Include action verbs and keywords from the job description.

Electronic Resumes

Employers often request electronic submission of resumes. Traditionally formatted documents become distorted when submitted electronically. Adjustments must be incorporated to accommodate electronic requests.

- Use plain text.
- Do not bold, underline, or italicize.
- Do not use bullets.
- Left align all text.
- Save as .txt or .doc format.
- All fonts should be the same size.
- No borders.

Master Interview Skills

► **First impressions are formed within an estimated 7 seconds of meeting a person. Make sure those seconds count in your favor in an interview.**

Practice These 5 Strategies to Help You Land the Job.

1. Prepare for an interview.

- Research the company. Understanding key information, products, and culture can provide a good foundation of discussion and help you decide if the company will be a good fit.
- Be familiar with the job description and responsibilities. Prepare questions to ask during the interview.

2. Highlight your skills and experience.

- Share any specific training that relates to the position.
- Provide specific information related to your unique skill set.
- Be prepared to discuss positive experiences of previous employment.
- Be prepared to share examples of your work.

3. Follow interview etiquette.

- Dress appropriately for the job. Formal business or business casual is recommended. Choose neutral-color clothing that is clean, neatly pressed, and free of stains. Be well groomed, wear clean shoes, and wear little to no perfume.
- Be friendly to everyone! Your interview begins the minute you enter the parking lot.
- Allow the interviewer to invite you in, and sit when and where instructed.
- Convey positive body language; this is essential. Have a firm handshake. Smile. Maintain eye contact. Demonstrate correct posture. Lean forward in your chair. Keep both feet on the floor.



4. Know how to answer tough interview questions and stay cool under pressure.

- Recruit a friend or family member and practice your answers aloud.
- Use the STAR method to help organize your thoughts: situation, task, action, results.
- Practice being relaxed. This will help you to listen carefully to the questions, pause to formulate your responses, then reply. Refrain from rushing to answer; this could cause undue stress.

5. Express interest at the conclusion of the interview.

- Be prepared to ask specific questions about the position, responsibilities, work environment, and the company.
- Thank the interviewer for his or her time and shake hands.
- Follow up with a handwritten thank-you note.

Success: You've Landed That Job!

You are now prepared to land the job. Remember to be mindful of the best practices in being a positive and productive team member.

According to the United States Department of Labor, teamwork is an essential part of workplace success. The ability to work as part of a team is considered one of the most important skills in today's job market. Teamwork involves building relationships and working with other people using important skills and habits:

- Working cooperatively
- Contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and effort
- Effective communication and listening skills
- Sense of responsibility to achieve common goals
- Healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences

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- Financial Literacy Workshops: budgeting, credit, identity theft and scams, savings, and banking
- Job Search Preparation: career choice search, resume writing, and interview skills
- Soft Skills Training: workshops for organizations, groups, and existing businesses and industries
- Home Buyer Education Workshops

For more information about educational opportunities, email aceshse@auburn.edu or call (334) 844-7560.



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For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit www.aces.edu/directory.

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