

The idea of looking for work can be very intimidating, especially if you don't know where to get started. This tipsheet breaks down the job-search process to help you understand how to put together the best strategy to land the job you need. For more assistance, students and recent graduates can sign up online for our Successful Strategies for Finding Work

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Before you start looking for work, you need to know what type of work you are looking for! This will require thinking about your immediate needs (like how much money you need and how much time you have to spare), what type of work you are qualified for and what you would enjoy. For help assessing your skills, experience, and interests, sign up for our Discover Your Skills and Options workshop. This assessment will also help later in the search—employers will want to hear about your relevant skills and experiences and how they fit the job requirements. Once you get focused, you can start your work search.

## HOW EMPLOYERS FIND NEW EMPLOYEES

For employers, the job-posting process can be frustrating, time-consuming, and unreliable. It is a lot of work to sort through stacks of resumes, call up candidates, and do interviews—and this doesn't always produce the best hire. So many employers try to avoid it that approximately 80% of jobs never get listed at all! This 80% of jobs is called the "hidden job market". So how do they hire? According to Richard Bolles, in *What Color is Your Parachute?*, they usually hire in this order:

1. From within—this method is the most reliable as the employer has personally seen the candidate in action. What this means to you: consider temporary, volunteer, and part-time opportunities, which can lead to full-time work. For more on volunteering, get a copy of the *Volunteering* tipsheet.
2. A job hunter who offers proof—this method shows the employer something concrete they can judge for themselves. What this means to you: develop a portfolio of relevant work including things like computer programs or websites, writing samples, or designs. Bring your portfolio to interviews and relevant meetings. For more information, read books like *The Career Portfolio Workbook*.
3. From a referral—the employer hires someone for whom a trusted friend or colleague can vouch. Although they are depending on someone else's opinion, it is a trusted opinion. What this means to you: try to get to know the people who can influence people with the power to hire. For more, read the Networking section of this tipsheet.
4. Screened applicants from agencies and search firms—while the employer is saved the trouble of locating and interviewing candidates, it does cost money and is not as

reliable as judging for themselves. What this means for you: consider these agencies, but be aware that their main client is the employer, and not you. To learn more, get a copy of the *Employment Agencies* tipsheet. Talk to industry insiders to discover how useful search firms are in the hiring process for your field, and for someone with your level of experience. Often search firms are recommended for candidates only if they have two or more years of industry experience.

5. From a job posting or resume—in this method the employer hires someone they found from a resume, either in response to a job posting or unsolicited. What this means to you: read the section below.

## HOW JOB SEEKERS LOOK FOR WORK

What is the easiest for employers, is usually the most inconvenient for job seekers. As a result, job seekers tend to look for work in the opposite order. They start by looking at job postings, then send out unsolicited résumés, consider search firms, research and network, and finally consider volunteering or taking a temporary or part-time job.

What does this mean for you? It means you have the most competition for the fewest opportunities when you stick to the easiest methods. Most successful job seekers employ a number of strategies, balancing their time between looking at postings, networking, and research. Keep this in mind as you read the following detailed explanations of the various work-search strategies to choose the right ones for you.

## JOB BOARDS

The most popular starting point for job seekers is the Internet job board. Start with those that are most relevant to your target area (like industry specific boards), and those that have the least competition (like student focused job boards). Instead of quickly applying to hundreds of postings, focus your attention on targeted applications for the jobs for which you are the most qualified and find most appealing.

### Student focused job boards

These sites have less competition than the national job boards because they are restricted to students and recent graduates. All U of T students and recent graduates (within the last two years) can register for access to the our online job postings at ► [www.careers.utoronto.ca](http://www.careers.utoronto.ca).

You can also register for Workopolis Campus, a national job board with a student focus. To get the U of T access code,

log in to the Career Centre website, and click on Workopolis Campus under Work Opportunities on the left of the page.

### Industry-specific job boards

For the best industry-specific sites, use directories like the *Canadian Internet Job Search Guide* or browse the Career Resource Library Weblinks.

### National job boards

You can expand your search by using larger boards, which are typically well-known to employers, and some positions can only be found there. In Canada, the most popular are:

- ▶ [www.monster.ca](http://www.monster.ca)
- ▶ [www.workopolis.com](http://www.workopolis.com)
- ▶ [www.jobshark.ca](http://www.jobshark.ca)
- ▶ [www.hotjobs.ca](http://www.hotjobs.ca)
- ▶ [www.jobbank.gc.ca](http://www.jobbank.gc.ca)
- ▶ [www.jobboom.com](http://www.jobboom.com)

### Should you post your resume online?

Some boards provide the option to post your résumé in an online résumé database that employers can search for qualified candidates. For advice on preparing an electronic resume, pick up a copy of the *Electronic Résumés* tipsheet in the Career Resource Library. Note that there are drawbacks to these sit-back-and-wait methods such as privacy concerns and a very low success rate.

## NETWORK BUILDING

Networking is the art of developing and maintaining relationships with the ultimate goal of creating visibility and keeping abreast of the latest opportunities. The more positive connections you make, the more people are likely to hire you or refer you to someone else who is hiring.

Start by talking to people you know and ask them if they can refer you to anyone working in your field of interest. Build your network by attending career fairs, employer information sessions, and networking events (pick up a copy of the *Career Fairs* or *Employer Information Session* tipsheets for tips on succeeding at these events). To learn more, read books such as *A Foot In the Door*, *The Networking Survival Guide*, or *How to Make Hot Cold Calls*.

### Informational interviews

Informational interviews are interviews where YOU ask the questions to get insider advice. Not only can this technique help you learn about a particular occupation and how to access opportunities, but it will also allow you to follow up with your contacts. Pick up a copy of the *Informational interview* tipsheet for more details.

## COMPANY AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH

Identify growth sectors and key companies by researching industries of interest. Pick up a copy of the *Industry and Labour Market Research* tipsheet to get you started.

Complement this research using company directories to identify additional organizations—pick up a copy of the *Company Research* tipsheet for specific resources. To boost your research skills, sign up for our Job Researching Using the Internet workshop, where you can learn how to identify potential unadvertised opportunities, research companies, and target your applications using online databases.

## HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

### Develop a plan of action

Depending on what kind of work you want, and how much time you have to look, this plan can vary greatly. Try to come up with realistic weekly goals based on the time you have available. You could strive to apply to five postings, and make five new contacts through research and networking—these numbers will depend on how much time and energy you can devote to the search.

Next, track your activities to ensure you are working efficiently towards meeting your goals. You may want to meet with a career counsellor to discuss your plan—make a Career Talk appointment online.

### Develop marketing materials

Resumes, cover letters, and interview skills are your key tools for marketing yourself to potential employers. Attend our Résumé and Cover Letter workshop and have your résumé critiqued by a professional in our Résumé Clinic. Also, be sure to attend our Interview Techniques workshop and participate in a one-on-one Practice Interview session to hone your interview skills. The Career Resource Library also offers these tipsheets: *Cover Letters*, *Résumés*, *Interviews*, and *Marketing Your Accomplishments*.

## WHAT IF YOU ARE UNDERQUALIFIED?

You may want a job for which you are not yet qualified. Research the qualifications through job postings, library resources, and informational interviews. If you got a job interview but not the job, ask the employer what would make you a more attractive candidate. This often takes the form of volunteering, internships, temporary jobs, entry-level work, professional development courses or education. Besides becoming more qualified, you will also make new contacts in your field, and keep active and focused.

## LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on successful work search strategies, read library books like *What Color Is Your Parachute?* and *How to Find the Best Job In Boom or Bust Times*. For tips on finding specific types of jobs, read tipsheets like *Working On Campus*, *Summer Work Search*, *Government Work Opportunities*, *Internships*, *Going Abroad*, *Research Experience*, and the International Student Centre brochure *Working Under a Student Visa*.