



Preparing for your Job Search

A resource guide for students and District 505 residents

Whether you are graduating from college or changing careers in mid-life, searching for a job can be overwhelming. By focusing on the following five steps, this guide will help you to map out a plan of action:

1. Know what type of work you would like to do
2. Become familiar with the job market
3. Prepare your resume and cover letter
4. Polish your interviewing skills
5. Follow up

1. Know what type of work you would like to do

Before you start your job search, you need to know what you're looking for and what you have to offer. *You also need to know how to articulate and convey your strengths and qualifications to potential employers.*

2. Become familiar with the job market

Know the major employers in your geographical (and career) area. View job postings and “help-wanted” ads to see what types of positions are posted, what skills employers are looking for and what application methods they prefer.

Network to gather information and to make contacts (ask for business cards and start a system to keep track of your contacts). 75% of all job openings in the US are not advertised!

3. Prepare your resume and cover letter—

Your resume is one of the most important elements of your job search and will need to be updated throughout your career as you gain new skills and experience. Read “[10 Resume Tips](#)” before you start, and use our “[Resume Guide and Worksheet](#)” to organize your thoughts.

Decide which resume format is best:

- Chronological—Highlights your work history
- Functional—Highlights your skills and accomplishments
- Combination—Combines advantages of both
- Electronic—Content is the same; format is different
([sample resumes](#))

It is your personal preference, but resumes usually include the following sections: “Objective”, “Education”, “Work History”, “Additional Skills”, “Honors & Awards”, “Additional Activities”.

Listing employment references—Instead of stating “References Available on Request” type a “Professional References” list as your second page (see page 4 in the [Resume Guide](#)).

Use professional references only (work or education related). Always ask permission before using someone's name as a job reference—it is a professional courtesy and they will be better prepared when an employer calls!

Cover letters and other job search correspondence--

See "[10 Cover Letter Tips](#)" for help writing your cover letter.

([Sample letters](#))

4. Polish your interviewing skills

Your resume has gotten you to the interview. Now your goal is to demonstrate that your career interests and qualifications are aligned with the employer's needs. Read "[10 Interview Tips](#)" to help prepare you for a successful interview. Think through how you would answer the following questions:

- [Commonly asked questions](#)
- [Behavioral questions](#)
- [Sample questions to ask employers](#)

5. Follow-up

Many people do not get the job primarily because they don't follow-up and continue to show interest in the position. Make sure you send that thank-you note and make a few phone calls!

- [Sample thank you letter](#)

For additional guidance, contact the Parkland College Career Center, Rm. A175

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www.parkland.edu/careercenter