The Job Search

The job search isn't a linear process, but there are some steps you can follow to make your job search more productive and effective. You can use this handout as a guide, and can return to any part of it at any time to keep you on target.

Know Yourself

If you aren't sure what you are looking for or where to start with your job search, set up an appointment with a career coach. Conduct a self-assessment to evaluate and determine your skills, interests, abilities, personality traits, values, and the experience you may have. By doing this, you will greatly increase your success in your job search because you will be able to tell prospective employers how you can be of benefit to them, and you will be targeting the right employers. It's also helpful to you as you are better able to demonstrate your value in resumes, cover letters, and interviews.

Your Job Search Marketing Tools

Resume

Make sure to keep your resume as updated as possible. If you need assistance with creating your resume, use the Center for Career Development resume handout found on our website, www.gettysburg.edu/career. It's also a good idea to have your resume critiqued by a career coach or career outreach assistant.

Cover Letter

While you should tailor your cover letter to each individual job, you can develop a general cover letter that is ready for editing at any time. If you need assistance with writing a cover letter, use the Center for Career Development cover letter handout found on our website, www.gettysburg.edu/career.

Online Presence

Build a professional presence online using sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and your own blog postings if appropriate. Over 75% of employers regularly use online resources to find job candidates, and to do informal background/reference checks. It is extremely important that you present yourself professionally through these media. Use a professional picture of yourself, remove all inappropriate posts, and consider tightening controls, blocking some individuals, or even closing down less-than-professional sites where you may have a presence. Even then, information can often still be found. The best advice – use the “mom test” and don’t post anything you wouldn’t want your own mother to see! See our LinkedIn handout for more details.

Portfolio

Portfolios are useful for job seekers who need to demonstrate or display their expertise. Teacher candidates, writers, fine arts and technical job seekers may benefit from creating a portfolio.
career coach can help you determine what to include.

Locating Job Opportunities

Networking is Your Best Job Search Tool

Experts agree that about 80% of all jobs are filled without being advertised. These positions are filled by candidates who come to an employer’s attention through recommendations from employees, referrals from trusted associates, or direct contact with the candidate.

Successful candidates are able to connect with the employer’s network. Does this mean the employer knows them? Not necessarily. But the candidate comes "recommended" by someone the employer trusts. Networking or using your contacts to connect with the employer’s contacts is the key.

- **Friends, Family, Employer, Faculty, Coach, Advisor, etc.** Your current contacts or those people you meet through your contacts can help you learn about positions, projects, or needs which might not be formally announced. Employers are always on the lookout for suitable candidates to replace departing, retiring or inefficient workers. Connecting with the people you know and the people they know will help you find the employers who seek your skills. Your contacts may help get your resume to the top of the pile.

- **Gettysburg College Alumni.** Previous graduates of Gettysburg can also be very helpful! Talking with people who are in the career field you want to work can get you started on learning where the jobs are. In addition, they can help solidify your resume for that career field. Use the Gettysburg College Professional Network on Linked In to get started.

- **Professional Organizations.** Meet more people through professional organizations. Professional organizations are a great way to expand your personal network and connect with people interested in the same career fields as you. Attending conferences will allow you to continue to develop your personal network.

Where to Find Jobs

Don’t just apply in a scattergun approach to anything you see. Be smart about your job search and research the best places to find your job targets. General websites like Career Builder, Indeed, and Monster are not very useful in finding specialized career fields and tend to list sales-oriented positions, entrepreneurial leads, and jobs mostly in business fields. Arts, humanities and social science jobs are not well represented here. Here are more savvy ways to research various job opportunities.

- **Employer Websites.** As you begin your job search it is important to know who the primary employers are in your field. Which companies (small – large) are likely to have openings in your area of interest? Make a list of these employers and find their websites. Bookmark the “career” section of each website and visit it on a regular basis.

- **Direct Contact of Companies.** Create and regularly review the list of companies that you want to work for and contact them. Refer to online business search databases and the local Chamber of Commerce for listings of companies and businesses. Carefully follow the application process for each employer. When at all possible, call and find out who the hiring person is and send them your cover letter and resume inquiring about potential job opportunities. You don’t have to wait for a posted opening.
**Keys to be effective:**

- Address your resume and cover letter to the hiring person
- Indicate in your cover letter how you can benefit their company (this will require some research)
- Follow up with a phone call after mailing your resume and cover letter

If the employer does not have an opening at this time, stay in touch. You never know when something may open up.

- **Association Websites.** Professional associations are in the business of promoting and expanding their profession. For that reason, their websites are often very useful for jobs or career information. Do some research and learn which associations are best for your career area. For more assistance, stop by or call the Center for Career Development.

- **Specialized Job Search Websites.** Websites that focus on a specific industry or profession tend to be well utilized by employers and job seekers alike. These sites only list job openings for a certain career area and tend to be more focused than the larger job search websites. Visit [www.gettysburg.edu/career](http://www.gettysburg.edu/career) for recommendations.

- **Geographic Search Sites.** There are also good geographic web resources that you can use if you know where you plan to live and work after graduation.

**Interview Preparation**

No one is a born interviewer, and everyone can benefit from practice interviews. The Center for Career Development staff can conduct a practice interview with you at any time; we also arrange on and off-campus mock interview days with alumni and employers, so check our website for those opportunities. Try web-based interview preparation products located on our website [www.gettysburg.edu/career](http://www.gettysburg.edu/career). You can use such products to go through many kinds of interview questions and see how you come across to an employer. Finally, attend an interviewing workshop or obtain the interviewing handout through our website or in the office.

You MUST also research the company, position, industry, and even the interviewer before every interview. At a minimum, look at the company website, research competitor sites, and learn as much as you can about the industry through reading and talking to knowledgeable contacts, including employees when possible.

**Create a Plan, Be Persistent, & Repeat Steps as Necessary**

Meet with a career coach to develop your plan. Treat your career search as a class or job and create time in your weekly schedule to devote to it. While some experts advise spending 30+ hours per week on the job search, this may not be realistic for you while you are in school. The point is, you do need to devote regularly scheduled time if you want to see progress. You may want to use a tool like Excel or an online resource to manage your activities. Set goals to contact a set number of employers each week and follow through. Note which company and what job you applied for, when you sent the application, who you may have spoken with or sent the application to, their contact information, when you plan to follow up, any notes or comments from the follow-up, and the date of your next planned contact. You may do the same with informational interviews and any networking
contact that you have made. Keeping good records will help you maintain order in a non-orderly process, and help you to see your progress. Make sure to reward yourself for progress by doing something you enjoy. The job search process is hard and you need to maintain a positive outlook. Don’t forget about volunteering or taking a post-graduate internship to make connections, build skills and expertise, and feel productive. Finally, be persistent and keep at it. Once you stop looking, it’s hard to start again.

Handling Job Offers and Your Ongoing Career Success

Your hard work has paid off and you’ve received a job offer! Before you immediately accept (or reject) an offer, talk to a career coach or review websites for advice on salaries and benefits, handling multiple offers, and advice for succeeding in that new job. There are good sources on the web regarding salaries based on cost of living, geographic areas, etc. You can slow talk with a career coach about negotiating job offers and tips for success on the job.

Final Review and Tips:

1. Have a resume and cover letter that clearly articulates your experiences, accomplishments, and skills AND how these relate to the position.
2. Talk to everyone you can about your career aspirations to build your network.
3. Use several resources to find jobs: internet, personal/professional connections, associations, etc.
4. Carve out time specifically for your job search. It can take 6-9 months (or more) to secure the right job.
5. Refine your job search and narrow it down to a few types of jobs you are looking for. Develop a list of potential employers and check their websites on a regular basis.
6. Pay attention to your online presence. Close down or tightly control sites. Google yourself to see what shows up.
7. Know why an employer should hire you and be able to communicate this verbally.
8. Look and feel your best at each interview. Get a good haircut, sleep well the night before, shine your shoes, and dress professionally.
9. Arrive at each interview well prepared, knowledgeable, practiced, and ahead of time.
10. Have a positive attitude.