



CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

APPLY, INTERVIEW & DECIDE

Search thoughtfully, prepare well, and
make informed choices

JOB SEARCHING

Job Search Checklist

- Before applying, make sure you have:
- Read the full job description
 - Researched the employer
 - Updated your resume
 - Tailored your resume to the position
 - Prepared a cover letter, if required
 - Checked your LinkedIn profile
 - Proofread all materials
 - Saved a copy of the job description before the posting closes
 - Recorded the application

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Applying without tailoring your resume
- Ignoring application instructions
- Waiting too long to start
- Using only one job board
- Forgetting to research the employer
- Not checking email or voicemail
- Failing to track applications
- Giving up too quickly after rejection

Track Each Application

Employer | Position | Date Applied | Materials Submitted | Contact | Follow-Up Date | Status



Key Point

A job search takes time. Stay organized, keep improving your materials, and use more than one search strategy

JOB SCAM ALERT

Too Good to Be True

- High pay for little work
- “No experience necessary” with unrealistic earnings

Vague Job Descriptions

- Duties are unclear or use generic phrases ilke “data entry” or “prcoessing payments”

On-the-Spot Offers

- You’re hired after only a text, email, or brief chat without a real interview

Requests for Personal Information

- Do no provide bank account information until you’ve accepted an offer and completed official hiring paperwork

Requests for Money

- Legitimate employers will **never** ask you to pay for training, equipment, or a background check

Suspicious email address

- Be cautious of employers using personal email accounts instead of a company email address

Fake Check

- An employer sends you a check to buy equipment and asks you to send part of the money elsewhere. The check later bounces, and you’re responsible for the lost money

If you’re unsure...

Stop before responding. Research the company independently and verify the job posting on the company’s website

INTERVIEW GUIDE: BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

How to prepare, show up, and follow up with confidence.

Do Your Homework

Research:

- The organization
- Role
- Mission
- Values
- Recent work
- Job description

Prepare Your Materials

Bring or keep nearby your:

- Resume
- Notes
- Questions
- Water
- Any materials requested by the employer

Practice Your Stories

Use the STAR Method:

Situation – what was going on
Task – what you needed to do
Action – what you did
Result – what happened

Prepare examples for teamwork, communication, leadership, and problem-solving

Phone Interview

- Confirm who's calling whom and be ready early
- Smile. It really changes your tone
- Stand up, speak clearly, keep notes handy
- No chewing, scrolling, or multitasking
- End by thanking them and asking about next steps
- Send a short thank-you email the same day

Virtual or AI Interview

- Log in 5–10 minutes early
- Eye-level camera, clean background, good light (do not have the light source behind you)
- Speak slightly slower and look at the camera
- Expect timed or prerecorded questions, pause before answering
- Weave in keywords from the job description
- Be yourself. Warmth and calm confidence go a long way

In-Person Interview

- Arrive 10–15 minutes early
- Greet everyone politely. First impressions start at the front desk
- Offer or return a handshake if appropriate, confident smile, phone off
- Bring extra resumes and a notepad and pen
- Observe the environment. How people interact tells you a lot

INTERVIEW GUIDE: DURING AND AFTER

During the Conversation	Common Questions
Listen first, answer clearly, and keep responses focused Most answers should be about 30-90 seconds If you don't know something, say how you would find out the answer	• Tell me about yourself • Why do you want to work here? • What are your strengths and weaknesses? • Describe a challenge you faced and how you handled it • How do you handle conflict? • Why should we hire you? • Where do you see yourself in five years?

Smart Questions to Ask	If A Question Feels Off
• How do you define success in this role? • What's the team culture like? • What are next steps in the hiring process?	If someone asks something personal (age, family, religion, etc.), redirect calmly: “I'm confident I can meet the expectations of this role. Could we focus on my qualifications and what you're looking for in a strong candidate?”

After the Interview

Send a thank-you email within 24 hours. Reflect on what went well and what you want to improve.

Follow up if you haven't heard back after 7–10 days, send a polite check-in.

AI Prompts to Prepare

- You are the hiring manager for this position [drop the job description into AI]. Mock interview me for a [job title] at [company name]. Give feedback after each question
- Here's my resume [without the contact information] and the job description. What questions might they ask?

PROFESSIONAL DRESS FOR INTERVIEWS

When in doubt, dress one level more polished than the job requires.

Business Casual (Most Interviews Today)

What Works

- What works**
- Collared shirt, blouse, knit top, or polished sweater
 - Slacks, chinos, ankle pants, midi skirt, or a simple dress
 - Optional blazer, cardigan, or structured jacket
 - Clean loafers, flats, dress shoes, or low heels
 - Neat, pressed clothing with simple accessories



Avoid

- T-shirts, hoodies, athletic wear, or distressed denim
- Wrinkled, stained, or ill-fitting clothing
- Loud patterns or graphics, distracting accessories, or strong fragrance
- Overly worn sneakers, flip-flops, casual sandals
- Anything overly revealing, sheer, or too casual for the setting

Professional Dress

Best for formal interviews, traditional workplaces, graduate/professional school interviews, and roles where a polished appearance is expected. Choose clothing that fits your identity while presenting a professional, interview-ready appearance.

What Works

- Matching suit or coordinated blazer with dress pants, skirt, or tailored dress
- Dress shirt, blouse, shell, or fine-gauge knit in a polished style
- Neutral or classic colors such as navy, gray, black, tan, cream, or other understated tones
- Clean dress shoes, loafers, flats, ankle boots, or conservative heels
- Pressed clothing that fits well and allows you to move comfortably
- Neat grooming and simple accessories



Avoid

- Wrinkled, stained, too tight, too short, sheer, or uncomfortable clothing
- Sneakers, flip-flops, casual sandals, or scuffed shoes
- Hoodies, T-shirts, distressed denim, athletic wear, or overly casual fabrics
- Flashy or distracting pieces
- Strong fragrance or excessive accessories
- Outfits that feel like a costume instead of a polished version of yourself



Key Point

Choose clothing that fits your identity, the role, and the level of formality expected by the employer

EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

SALARY, BENEFITS, AND FIT & NEGOTIATION BASICS

Receiving a job offer is exciting, but do not accept immediately without reviewing the full picture. A good decision considers more than the salary.

Review Before Accepting	Questions to Ask	
• Job title and responsibilities • Salary or hourly wage • Full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, or contract status • Work schedule • Start date • Location, travel, remote, or hybrid expectations • Health, dental and vision insurance • Retirement plan • Paid time off, sick leave, and holidays • Professional development or tuition assistance • Probationary period, if any • Supervisor and team structure	• Can I receive the offer in writing? • What benefits are included? • When do benefits begin? • What is the expected work schedule? • Who will supervise me? • What does success look like in the first 90 days? • Is there training for new employees? • Is the salary negotiable? • When do you need my decision?	 Key Point A higher salary is not always the better offer if the commute, schedule, benefits, or work environment are weak

Negotiation Basics

Negotiation is a professional conversation about the offer. It does not mean making demands

Where Flexibility May Be Limited Research the typical pay range for similar roles in the same location. Consider your experience, skills, education, and the responsibilities of the position. Entry-level roles, government or state jobs, schools, structured training programs, and fixed pay scales may offer less room to negotiate
What You May Be Able to Negotiate • Salary or hourly pay • Start date • Schedule • Remote or hybrid options • Relocation support • Professional development • Signing bonus in some fields
Negotiation Language Sample Negotiation Language Thank you again for the offer. I'm very interested in the position. Based on the responsibilities of the role and my related experience in ___, I wanted to ask whether there is flexibility in the salary range. Accepting an Offer Thank you for offering me the ___ position. I am happy to accept and look forward to joining the team. Please let me know if there are any next steps I should complete before my start date. Declining an Offer Thank you for offering me the ___ position. I appreciate your time and consideration. After careful thought, I have decided to decline the offer. I enjoyed learning more about your organization and wish you the best in your search.

 **Key Point**

Ask professionally, use research, and be prepared for the answer to be yes, no, or somewhere in between

MONEY BASICS AFTER GRADUATION

Your first job after college is not just about the salary. It is also about understanding how much money you actually take home, what benefits you receive, and how your choices affect your financial stability

Gross Pay vs Take-Home Pay	Common Payroll Deductions	Build a Basic Monthly Budget
Gross pay is the amount you earn before taxes and deductions Take-home pay is the amount you actually receive after taxes, insurance, retirement contributions, and other deductions.	- Federal income tax - State income tax - Social Security - Medicare - Health insurance - Dental and/or vision insurance - Retirement contributions - Parking, uniforms, or other workplace costs, depending on the employer	Estimate your monthly costs before accepting a job or moving to a new city Common expenses can include: - Rent - Utilities - Groceries - Transportation - Car payment and insurance - Gas - Student loan payments - Phone - Internet - Medical expenses - Savings - Personal spending
Benefits Have Financial Value	Emergency Fund	Student Loans
Benefits can save you money. When comparing offers, consider: - Health insurance cost - Paid time off - Retirement match - Tuition assistance - Professional development - Flexible schedule - Remote or hybrid work - Commuting costs	Try to build an emergency fund over time. Even a small amount saved each month can help with car repairs, medical costs, moving expenses, or unexpected bills	If you have student loans, know: - Who services your loans - When repayment begins - Minimum monthly payment - Interest rate - Repayment options - Whether your job qualifies for any forgiveness or repayment programs



Key Point

A good financial decision is not always the highest paying option. Consider take-home pay, benefits, cost of living, commute, growth potential, and quality of life