

Introduction to the Job Seeker's Toolkit

The Job Seeker's Toolkit aims to help you acquire essential skills necessary for successful employment. The skills and topics reviewed will help you move towards a successful job search and beyond. The Job Seeker's Toolkit, through a series of five courses, will help in building your own toolkit to assist you in preparing for the world of work.

The five courses are structured into modules and activities that build on the content and exercises of the preceding material. For this reason, we recommend working your way through the courses in chronological order and completing each assignment along the way. However, if you have an interview tomorrow, feel free to skip ahead for tips!

The effort you put into building your own Toolkit will provide you with a foundation fundamental for success in the world of work.

The Job Seeker's Toolkit is built to accompany you through the job search and the employment lifecycle, from building self-awareness to determining the best-fit career path, identifying employment opportunities, preparing for an interview, all the way to maintaining employment and advancing your career.

Courses 1 and 2 will help you discover your career interests.

Course 1: Self-Awareness covers self-assessment and evaluation.

Course 2: Career Exploration – Methods and Resources is all about exploring the career options that may be right for you.

Courses 3 and 4 will assist in finding job opportunities and how to hone the skills that are crucial in obtaining a job offer.

Course 3: Finding Employment dives into the tools necessary for finding job leads.

Course 4: The Interview is about sharpening interview skills and landing a job offer.

Course 5 will help you prepare for your new job.

Course 5: Maintaining Employment provides information on job maintenance and what it takes to be a successful employee. It will also point you to further resources to help with continued professional growth within your chosen field.

COURSE 1: Self-Awareness

Module 1: Networking: Why and How

Everyone has different relationships with the people we come in contact with. Our relationships within our network may be casual, familial, professional, intimate, etc. Throughout our lives, these relationships provide us with different types of support. People can sometimes move from one type of relationship to another while remaining a part of your support network.

Who is in your network?

Give thought to the people you have different relationships with and what area of your network they fall within. Some examples may be your parents, siblings, teachers, spouse/partner, peers, doctors, employers, coworkers, and even bus or rideshare drivers.

All these people are part of your personal network of relationships.

It has been documented that most job seekers get hired through a personal connection of one kind or another. It is for this reason it is important to know who is in your network. It is also important to maintain contact with people in your network. Connecting with your personal network is critical to your job search. Throughout this course, you will be asked to seek information, guidance, and advice from your network, so it's important to define and organize your relationships within your network properly.

1-1 The Network Pyramid

A good way of organizing your network is to use the shape of a five-level pyramid. The pyramid is small at the top peak and widens as you move down to each of the subsequent levels of the pyramid. You would "stand alone" as the top narrow part of the pyramid. The following four pyramid levels will define individuals and their relationship to you.

Starting with a narrow peak at the top and broadening to a large base at the bottom, each pyramid level contains a different group of people based on their relationship and closeness to you.

The First Level (top of the pyramid or the point of the pyramid)

Since your personal network pyramid organizes relationships as they relate to you, the top level belongs to you. As the pyramid broadens toward the base, the levels of relationship decrease in closeness to you. Keep this in mind as you fill in the rest of the pyramid.

The Second Level (second from the top of the pyramid or fourth from the bottom)

Level two contains the people with whom you are closest. You might include your parents, close siblings, spouse, partner, and very close friends. You feel comfortable sharing most of your thoughts and feelings with these people. You should also know that any sensitive information would be treated confidentially with this group of individuals. The individuals in this group should be able to provide you with honest feedback, advice, and support.

The Third Level (the middle level of the pyramid)

Most of your friends, coworkers, and people you often interact with will be in the third level. This level is for established friends and solid relationships. Extended family members you enjoy spending time with are

appropriate for this level as well.

The Fourth Level

The fourth level is the place for acquaintances. Some examples are a former or current colleague, a neighbor, or a coworker. People with whom you do not see often but enjoy spending time with are in the fourth level.

The Fifth Level (bottom level and widest level or base of the pyramid)

The fifth level of your network pyramid represents people you rarely encounter. Here is where to place people you pay to assist you, your doctors, dentist, hairdresser, or people who help you with shopping or transportation needs. The people here are not strangers, but they are also not likely to become your friends, as you have a business relationship with them.

<SIDE BAR>

Insert Network Pyramid Image

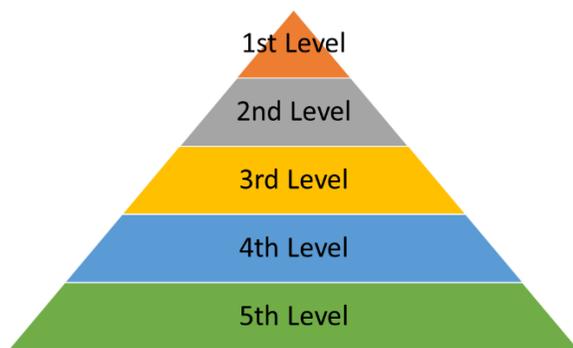


Image of Pyramid with five levels from 1st Level at the top of the pyramid to 5th at its base.

<END SIDEBAR>

1-2 Sample Network Pyramid

Denise's Network Pyramid

First Level (Top Level): Me (Denise)

Second Level: Parents, Jason (younger brother), Katie (older sister), Matt (brother-in-law), Laverne (sister-in-law), Freddie, Nicolas, George, James and Lisa (nephews and niece), Jacob, Jack, Tim, Tina, Olga, Nicole, Jessica (cousins), Mark, Dave, Amy, Tiffany, Jamie, Collin, Ryan (best friends).

Third Level: Jenny, Tiffany V., Sherlanda, Jermaine, Jacky, Meghan, Rick, Jim, Sean, Lauren, Tilly, Tori, Sarah, Christi, Audrey, Elizabeth, Vicky, Sonya and Joan (high school/college friends).

Fourth Level: Prof. Barbieri, Prof. Tiffany, Mr. Columbus, Mr. Salvador, Prof. Bogota, Professor Frost, Professor Mejia (teachers whom I am close to and taught classes in my major), Courtney, Sarah, Jeremy, Jack, Josh, George, Billy, Kevin, Mike, Isabella, Darren, Andrew, Barbie, Jackie, Roxy, Rebecca, Janet, Georgia, Amy, Jane, Jessica, Fred, Tom, Manny, Chenoa, Casey, Cassandra, Jennifer, and Jenna (people I have met in my community, and who I like, but I do not yet feel are friends).

Fifth Level: Dr. Susan Stanley (ophthalmologist), Mr. Tom (reader at college), Mrs. Jacobs (Vocational Rehabilitation counselor who I just met), Mr. Franklin (bus driver), Miss Jonas (hair stylist), Ms. Frascator, Coach Longo, Mr. Sean Combs, Ms. Ray, Mr. Benny, Ms. Malik (staff with whom I've worked at college), Mr. Freise (principal of my high school), Dr. Andre (Dean of my major in college), Tara (bike store clerk), Silvio (pizza guy), Jack (landscaper), William (ice cream shop clerk), Ed (physical therapist), Jenny (religious schoolteacher), Mr. Nick Afflitto (drum teacher), Dr. Michaels (family doctor), Ms. Becker (community nurse), Mrs. Jennings (dentist), Jeff (supermarket customer service representative), Ms. Jacky (librarian), and Frank (handyman in my apartment building).

1-3 Assignment: Your Network Pyramid

Read the APH ConnectCenter blog, [Game On: Networking Your Way to Becoming a Brave and Brilliant Professional](#).

Write out who is included in your network pyramid, starting with you at the top level (1st Level) and working your way down to the fifth level.

Module 2: Building, Expanding, and Maintaining Your Network

2-1 Lesson: Developing Contacts That Can Help Provide Employment Opportunities

All relationships offer some benefit, whether friendship, knowledge, or simply a chance to know someone new. A network is a supportive system comprising various relationships built around sharing information and services among individuals with a common interest or connection.

Networking means you are actively cultivating relationships with people who might be helpful regarding professional or personal development. This may be in an academic setting, looking for employment, or searching for a new place to live. Networking is an important skill, particularly for an active job seeker. Just like any other skill, becoming a good networker requires much practice. Many networking opportunities will present themselves in your daily life; you just need to identify and act on them.

Expanding Your Network

Family, friends, colleagues, and community members are all part of your network. Some people network naturally. They will go from group to group, introducing themselves at a party, mingling, and meeting everyone in the room. This kind of person is a good networker. It can be difficult for others, especially if you're shy or lack the right social skills.

As a person who is blind or low vision, networking can be complicated. You may be unable to identify people visually or read nametags, or the room may be too loud to hear and recognize voices.

Remember that expanding your network is a skill that requires practice.

If you are nervous about networking, you can also role-play with trusted members of your network. It is important to be open to feedback when doing role-playing. Role-playing is intended to help you work through real-world situations.

The more you practice, the easier networking will become. The larger your network, the better your chance of finding suitable work.

When meeting new people, be aware of how you present yourself. Practice carrying yourself in a positive

manner and work on appearing confident and competent. Share agreeable, affirmative information about yourself and the topics you discuss.

The following are ideas for how and where to meet new people for your network.

Organizations and Social Groups

Organized clubs and groups are great networking opportunities. Joining local professional organizations, groups for students and young professionals, civic committees within your town, projects at your local library or schools, church groups, and community causes are all great ways to meet others.

Volunteerism

Volunteering is a great way to meet people and make connections. Locating a volunteer position related in some way to the job you're interested in pursuing is even better.

Out and About or Meeting Virtually

Networking occasions can occur at any time. You could be on a plane, train, bus, or virtual meeting when the next opportunity presents itself. Think of every new person as a new contact or a possible new member of your personal network.

Maintaining Your Network

Keeping in regular contact with individuals within your network is important. It helps you and them know what is happening in each other's professional lives. This allows your contacts to remember you. The best way to keep contacts engaged is to regularly communicate with them about what's going on in their lives. Though you might share information about yourself along the way, the most effective way to build relationships is to be curious and enthusiastic about what other people are doing. One way to keep up-to-date on people is to maintain information with pertinent information. For example, record and organize current contact information such as a person's full name, email, etc. It's also a good idea to write a brief sentence about when you met or a few topics you have in common. You can put the information in the contacts on your computer or cell phone and be sure to update the information regularly. Look through your notes to refresh your memory before connecting with those in your network.

Social Networking: Pros and Cons

Social networking apps make it very easy to share information with others. These tools can support and strengthen your job search. However, one should be mindful that if used recklessly, they can also cause serious damage to your relationships, image, and job prospects.

Frequently, potential employers research people on social media. This allows a potential employer to see how the public may view an applicant. An employer may view postings of poor-tasting jokes as a reflection of comments that may be said while at work. For these reasons, it is important to consider what you share and who might view the postings. Think about how the posting may reflect back onto you. What might someone think about you if they read a posting and found it offensive or if it promoted a competing company? Regardless of your privacy settings, remember that you have very little control over what happens to anything you choose to share online. People can copy and repost information, attributing it to you.

It's always best to assume that anything you post will be visible to a potential employer. What might be a funny joke to your close personal friends could appear unprofessional, offensive, derogatory, or irresponsible to

someone considering you for a job. It is also important to remember that potential employers can find even old postings, hindering career aspirations.

On the other hand, you can use social networking apps to easily keep your contacts fresh, keep informed about and engaged with what people in your network are doing, and represent yourself in a favorable and positive light. Since the majority of jobs are filled through current employees who recommend someone from their network, careful and considerate social networking can be a great support for your job search.

Read the APH ConnectCenter blogs [How Can LinkedIn Benefit the Job Seeker Who Is Blind or Low Vision?](#) and [Getting LinkedIn as a Person Who Is Blind or Low Vision](#).

<SIDE BAR Call-Out Box>

Key Takeaway:

Never Stop Networking!

As the saying goes, "It is easier to find a job when you have a job." Once you have a job, there is nothing wrong with continuing to expand and maintain your network. Getting a better job is easier if you're currently employed. Additionally, if you keep active with your social and professional networks, your contacts will be more likely to think about you when an opportunity arises.

Membership in a professional organization can show your commitment to your area of employment. A hiring manager may view membership in a professional organization as a positive aspect. It shows your commitment to learning about your profession.

<END of SIDE BAR Call-Out Box>

2-2 Sample Network Expansion Plan

Darlene's Network Expansion Plan

I plan to join a local networking organization in my area to meet up with others looking for employment. I will research both in-person as well as virtual groups. Additionally, I will join a professional organization related to microbiology, my area of study, and I've had an internship at a local lab. I will also look at scientific organizations that may need blogs written as a possible way to get known in my field.

While in high school, I participated in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). The focus was on general business strategies, skills, and structures. This organization was important in expanding my personal network in high school and later on.

2-3 Assignment: Your Network Expansion Plan

Read the APH ConnectCenter blog, [Principles for Expanding Your Professional Network When You Are Blind or Low Vision](#).

After reading the above blog, write a paragraph explaining how you intend to expand your network. Are you going to join organizations or groups? If so, identify the organizations and discuss how joining will benefit you.

Module 3: Self-Assessment and Constructive Feedback

3-1 Lesson: Identifying Your Strengths and Weaknesses through Constructive Criticism

The Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a careful reflection, discovery, and analysis process to articulate your strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, abilities, values, personality, and goals.

For many reasons, performing a self-assessment at the beginning of your career exploration is important. A thorough self-assessment will help you focus your job search and preparation on positions most appealing to you and the best match for your skills. Self-assessment identifies the areas where you can be confident in your abilities and where you might want to improve. Perhaps more important, self-assessment helps you articulate your goals and aspirations so you know what you're working toward in the long- and short-term.

Seeking Feedback

The first step in your self-assessment is to seek feedback in the form of constructive criticism from people you know and trust.

Why Feedback?

Job market applicants are often judged by their presentation. The image you project to a potential employer often makes up a great deal of the information they will consider about you. It's important to get a good sense of how others perceive you so you can emphasize your strengths, improve your weaknesses, and take control of your image. You need to ask for constructive criticism to know how others see you and what you might want to adjust.

Constructive Criticism

We all need help and various opinions when determining how people see us. Those who can best help us see ourselves objectively are the people with whom we interact most. In your assignment for this lesson, you will ask a variety of people you know for their honest opinions of your strengths and weaknesses. This exercise aims to objectively and accurately understand how you present yourself to the world.

The kind of feedback you will seek is called constructive criticism. The purpose of constructive criticism is not to make you feel bad or to focus on your flaws but to celebrate your assets and identify those areas you might want to improve or change.

Knowing both your strengths and weaknesses can be a valuable tool for improvement. While it's always nice to hear what people think of our strengths, it can be challenging to hear what people think of our weaknesses. Focus on using this information to your advantage. Analyze each person's opinion, then look to see how you can improve on the areas they've mentioned. Try to avoid becoming defensive when someone offers an honest opinion, even if it differs from your own. Remember that this is a self-enrichment exercise. Being open and available to constructive criticism can really help you develop and mature as a person.

Read the APH ConnectCenter article, [Negative Feedback: How to Handle It and How to Use It](#).

Choosing Your Participants

When thinking of people to ask for constructive criticism, remember that you want a range of opinions from people involved in different aspects of your life. Ideally, some people you ask will know you very well, like family members or close friends, and others will be familiar with you but not intimate. Refer to your network pyramid: choose people from levels two, three, and four to get various opinions.

Remember that you are asking these people for their help and their time. Before asking someone for an opinion, take some time to think about how you will present yourself when you ask. If you are coming back from the gym and haven't showered yet, this might affect how you are perceived, and it also might not be the

best example of how you would present yourself to a potential employer. Take the time to present yourself in a realistic light so that the person you're asking for help can offer relevant, informative, and helpful feedback.

3-2 Sample Feedback Notes

Debbie's Feedback Notes

Part 1: Constructive Criticism

Feedback from: Mother

- Pretty hair
- Caring
- Organized
- Talkative, which can either be a good or a bad thing
- Well read, reads a lot
- Good with animals
- Dresses well
- Sometimes dozes off at inappropriate times
- Helpful at home
- Impatient at times

Feedback from: Mrs. Smith, English teacher

- Good technology skills
- Usually organized
- Well dressed
- Excellent reader
- Tends to procrastinate
- Gets along with classmates
- Enthusiastic
- Tends to monopolize conversations
- Impatient
- Shy in new situations, takes time to become comfortable

Feedback from Mary, older sister

- Smart
- Reads a lot
- Nice
- Clean
- Good sister
- Talks a lot
- Good on the computer
- Opinionated at times
- Takes over conversations and interrupts

Feedback from Jana, friend and fellow club member

- Funny
- Dresses well

- Interrupts a lot
- Smart
- Well-read
- Shy sometimes
- Honest
- Too talkative at times
- Organized: She is our club's secretary

Part 2: Analysis

Strengths

- Affectionate
- Caring
- Dresses well
- Enthusiastic
- Excellent reader
- Funny
- Gets along with classmates
- Good technology skills
- Good with animals
- Helpful at home
- High-level computer user, did well in our computer networking class
- Honest
- Inquisitive
- Nice
- Organized
- Smart
- Talkative
- Well dressed

Weaknesses

- Can be awkward in public situations
- Tends to procrastinate
- Impatient
- Opinionated at times
- Sometimes dozes off at inappropriate times
- Takes over conversations and interrupts
- Impatient at times
- Shy in new situations, takes time to become comfortable
- Talkative, which can either be a good or a bad thing

I liked hearing the comments: smart, attractive, funny, organized, honest, high-level computer user, good sister, dresses well, gets along with others, and pretty hair. I did not like hearing: monopolizes conversations, too talkative, opinionated, and interrupts conversations.

Knowing that I am a bit on the talkative side, I could make an effort to talk less and be more appropriate so as not to dominate conversations, even though I think I do this because I have a lot to say and have a lot of knowledge to share. I will try to work on this because I realize others have important things to say, too, and I could also learn from them.

I believe that the interrupting thing may be a result of not observing body language from others, and I get so excited and want to express my opinions, not because I mean to be rude. Am I opinionated? I am not sure. I do have strong opinions about many things and express them. Maybe trying to sit back and listen more to improve on these areas over the next few weeks will be a good exercise for me. I will write something in my calendar to remind me each day.

3-3 Assignment: Seek Feedback

Part 1: Constructive Criticism

During the next two days, ask five different people (family members, friends, classmates, teachers, colleagues, or others) for feedback about you. Ask each participant to provide five to ten comments that describe you, balanced between strengths and weaknesses: the things they think you do well and those that could use improvement. Collect responses in a format accessible to you; you'll be using them later. Be sure to include the respondent's name and relation to you when gathering information.

Part 2: Analysis

Compile a list of the strengths and weaknesses you heard in your feedback. Describe what you liked hearing and what you did not like hearing. When listing areas for improvement, think about how you might make changes.

Module 4: Identifying Career Interests

4-1 Lesson: Taking an Inventory of What You Like to Learn About and Do

The next step in your self-assessment is to take an inventory of your interests to focus your job search on positions that match your curiosity. This inventory will help you direct your job search toward employment that will be meaningful and of long-lasting interest to you.

What is an interest?

An interest is anything you're motivated to discover, think about, or do. Is there a subject in school you enjoy reading more about on the weekends? Is there a specific area related to your academic studies you want to know more about? Do you have a hobby that you think about and like to participate in every chance you get? Your interests may be specific and focused (World War II maritime history, flowers of South America, Florida State University women's soccer, venomous snakes of Australia) or broad (music, dance, sports, art, science, medicine, nature). You may have been motivated to read a book or two about something that caught your attention or spent years learning about a favorite topic or participating in an activity you love.

Interests broaden our engagement with the world around us. Enthusiasm in one area may lead to curiosity about another related area. When you follow your interests wherever they lead, you can develop expertise in areas that seem incompatible or unrelated but may ultimately prove very valuable in combination with each other.

George Will is a Pulitzer-Prize-winning political journalist and author whose lifelong love of baseball has made him one of the top experts on the sport's history. These areas of expertise-politics and baseball, combined with his skills as a journalist, allowed him to write and publish many books and articles about politics and baseball in a particular way. One of the hallmarks of Will's journalism is that he uses baseball to illustrate a point about politics. Will's devotion to his two main passions has given him a unique way of combining his interests.

Read the APH ConnectCenter blog, [Self-Awareness is Essential to Career Success as a Person Who is Blind or Visually Impaired](#).

4-2 Sample Interest List

Philip's Interest List

1. Mathematics and science
2. Learning about wildlife
3. Reading science fiction books
4. Connecting with friends and family virtually or in person
5. Podcasts
6. Watching cooking shows and mysteries
7. Taking long trail walks with my partner and my guide dog
8. Wrestling for my college team
9. Going to the arena to watch professional wrestling

10. Playing my guitar

Specifics:

1. Mathematics and science: I enjoy math and science courses. A math problem is like a puzzle. I excel in math and would like to continue taking classes to help me progress. I know mathematics is used in many fields, including science. I also enjoy problem-solving and getting to do experiments.
2. Wildlife: I like learning about the animals in my environment: birds, fish, and the little critters in the woods.
3. Reading science fiction books: I enjoy reading science fiction books because it allows me to explore the fictional part of science fiction. I also can imagine and create things in my mind in a fictional world. Reading is what helps me relax and allows me to learn new concepts. Reading is important to succeed in many careers.
4. Connecting with friends and family allows me to keep up with friends I have met and make new and interesting friends worldwide. My technical skills allow me to connect with people all over. I also enjoy assisting people to use technology.
5. Podcasts: I listen to podcasts to keep up with news and learn about topics of interest.
6. Watching cooking shows: I search online for cooking shows to learn about foods from various countries and cooking techniques. I also learn from mysteries. Audio description provides me with information on the visual aspects of the shows, allowing me to understand aspects of the visual world I don't always see clearly.
7. Walking on the hiking trails near my house and other places I visit is educational and requires planning. I often also meet lots of interesting people who are fellow hikers.
8. Wrestling in high school and now in college has taught me how to be part of a team. I really enjoy being a part of the team, but I also enjoy getting to compete one-on-one against someone. I have also made some great friends who are teammates. The competition and practices force me to be in great shape physically and sharp mentally. You have to anticipate moves and counteract your opponent's moves.
9. Watching professional wrestling: I enjoy watching professional wrestling with my friend Peter and my little brother. They both describe actions when I cannot see enough to know what is happening. The wrestlers will be doing an interview, and a wrestling match will happen. Sometimes the wrestlers leave the ring and grab a chair or other object to bring into the ring. All of the wrestlers have great personalities. It is not like the wrestling I do in school, but it is entertaining.
10. Playing my guitar: I learned how to play guitar in elementary school. When I am frustrated or need time alone, I will go to my room and play my guitar. It allows me to relax and not think about anything besides the music I make in my head. One of the dorms at my college also has a jam night, and sometimes I participate. The guitar has also helped me make some friends. I have met other people who play different kinds of instruments. We've discussed the types of music we enjoy listening to and playing. We have talked about the differences in the kinds of instruments we play.

4-3 Assignment: List Your Interests

Make a list of your top ten interests. What do you enjoy doing at home, at school, at work, and in the community? List your interests as they occur to you, and then go back and specify what you like about each interest area.

You may also want to make a specific listing related to your work history if you have worked in various jobs. List the job and the associated tasks that you found interesting.

Next, take some time to brainstorm about the skills you use when you're pursuing your interests and also what professions might use these skills. Write down all of your ideas.

Module 5: Matching Skills and Abilities to Jobs

5-1 Lesson: Matching Skills and Talents to Specific Jobs

Now that you've spent some time considering your interests, the next step in your self-assessment is to think about the abilities you currently have, which jobs your current skill set might best be suited for, and what adjustments you might want to make to better prepare for the type of job you want.

A skill is a learned and practiced ability. You can use a skill to create something (writing is used to create a poem, essay, or book), to provide a service (accounting is used to prepare tax returns; database design is used to organize information), to work with tools or equipment (leather crafting, fixing a computer), or perform tasks (cooking a meal, planting a garden, playing hockey). Everyone has talents that can be developed into skills or abilities with practice and guidance.

Every job requires the mastery and application of some set of skills. The better you are at doing a task needed by an employer, the more attractive an applicant you'll be and the more value you will have as an employee. Take a moment to review your interest inventory and the brainstorming you did about your interest-related jobs. What sorts of skills do you think those jobs require? What skills do you think an employer would want to see in applicants for each position?

Here is an example of how Andre focused interests, skills, and talents on a marketable skill set.

5-2 Sample List of Skills

Andre's List of Skills

1. Public Speaking
 - a. Sales representative
 - b. Public relations/marketing
 - c. Teacher/professor
2. Computer applications and programming
 - a. Computer programmer
 - b. Technical support representative/customer service/information technology support
 - c. Computer sales/electronics sales
3. Communication
 - a. Telemarketing Representative
 - b. Customer service representative
 - c. Administrative assistant
4. Woodworking
 - a. Carpenter
 - b. Contractor
 - c. Carpenter's assistant
 - d. Sales representative at Home Depot
 - e. Inventory database specialist at a wood yard
5. Organizational Systems
 - a. Administrative assistant
 - b. Applies to most jobs/careers
 - c. Office Manager
 - d. Inventory Specialist/manager

6. Fluent in Spanish language
 - a. Translator
 - b. Customer service/help desk
 - c. International business work
 - d. Work Sales at a business in a Spanish-speaking community
7. Pottery
 - a. Work in a pottery store
 - b. Art Teacher
 - c. Potter/self-employed
8. Mathematics at a general level
 - a. Sales representative
 - b. Cashier
 - c. Basic accounting or finance
 - d. Office Manager
9. Notetaking
 - a. Administrative assistant
 - b. Transcription
 - c. Paralegal
 - d. Reporter/writer
10. Creative writing
 - a. Writer (Novels, short stories, poetry)
 - b. Reporter
 - c. Copy editor
 - d. Sales Representative (use stories to sell to customers)
 - e. Public Relations/Marketing/Advertising

Now, make your inventory:

Taking a thoughtful inventory of your current skills will help you

- Identify areas of proficiency and ability
- Assess how your skills might support work in your areas of interest
- Begin to think about how you might market your skills to a potential employer
- Identify skills you might want to spend the most effort on improving-everyone has room for improvement!

5-3 Assignment: List Your Skills and Abilities

Make a list of ten skills you currently have. Rank the list of skills, with one being the skill with which you think you have the highest competence and ten, the skill with which you have the lowest.

Once you have your list, write down the jobs you think use these skills. Notice if there is an overlap with the jobs you brainstormed in your interest inventory. Are your strongest skills related to the jobs mentioned in your interest inventory? If there isn't any overlap, or if your weaker skills are those related to jobs in your interest area, write down how you might bridge the gap between your interest-related jobs and your current skill set.

Module 6: Bringing Your Values to the Job Search

6-1 Lesson: Determining How Personal Values Might Influence Your Job Search.

Values play a large part in how we make our way in the world. Values can be expressed through what we say to and about others, they can determine how we behave in our daily lives, and they can shape our most fundamental and most complex decisions. When you have a clear sense of your job-related values, you can focus on finding a good career match for the most important things in life.

Happiness with your employment will be strongly influenced by whether your job matches what you've decided is important for yourself and your lifestyle. If you value freedom over security, you might prefer self-employment over working for a single-location company run by others. If you value a good work-life balance, you will likely prefer a job that does not require long overtime hours or a lot of travel. If you value a high salary and fast career advancement, you will probably find more satisfaction at a large corporation instead of a small organization.

You can make a more informed career decision by thoughtfully weighing your values against the jobs you investigate. It's crucial to recognize that more than one of your values may be met or in conflict in any one position and that negotiating these matches or conflicts is part of making a good employment decision. Sometimes, people compromise on some values because their most important values align with a given position. Remember, it's easier to compromise on values of less importance than those about which you feel most strongly.

6-2 Sample Values List

Silvia's Values

1. Family
2. Friends
3. Love
4. Health
5. Independence
6. Transportation
7. Work
8. Security
9. Leisure/free time
10. Education

Silvia's 1st Analysis

I recently decided whether to join the Young Writer's Club that meets in the evenings at the local library weekly. The club requires you to attend at least two monthly meetings. I was very interested in joining this club at the library because I really do enjoy writing. I had to weigh the decision because it was a big commitment; you must make two monthly meetings to stay in the club. I value my friends and my free time; this commitment would take up much of that time. I had to think about whether I would rather write or hang out with my friends. I chose my friends over the club because I am a senior in college and feel that most of us will lose touch after this year. I wanted to spend as much time as possible with my friends.

I had to consider whether I valued work and school more than my friends. I have talked to the librarian and will participate in the spring semester. I know I will make some new friends in the club as well, but I want to spend this time with my current friends at school.

Silvia's 2nd Analysis

I am considering my sister Aimee's feelings as I look at employment options. She is my best friend, and we are extremely close. The employment I apply for must be close enough that she can visit often if I need to move. Aimee is four years younger than I am. I have decided that I can only move a two-hour bus ride away, so Aimee can visit easily. I am considering her feelings and value my family and that relationship. Aimee values travel; I really do not value traveling, and she will not mind traveling to visit me once I move.

I have a totally different relationship with my brother Jorge. He moved across the country last year, and I have only seen him once since then. Jorge does not value family as much as I do, but he does value warm weather.

If I was offered a job more than a few hours away, I would have to turn down that job. I know I would like to work near where I grew up. This is something that is important to me as I value my family.

6-3 Assignment: List Your Values

1. Make a list of ten of your values. Rank them from one to ten, with one being the most important and ten being the least important.
2. Explain how one of your values may have influenced a recent decision.
3. Choose a person in your life whose values are important to consider when deciding on a new job. Describe how this person's values influence your decisions.
4. Next, choose a person in your life whose values differ from your own. Explain how that person's values differ from yours and your relationship with that person.

Module 7: Your Work Personality

7-1 Lesson: Identifying Your Work Personality Type

The next step in your self-assessment is to identify your work personality. We will use vocational psychologist John Holland's system of personality typing. He has identified six work personality types, defined below. Though individuals may have a dominant work personality type, most demonstrate a combination of these types at any given time and appropriately fit within two or three categories.

Definitions of Holland's Work Personality Types

Realistic: This personality type is mechanically inclined, likes to use tools, possesses good manual dexterity, is athletic, and/or enjoys the outdoors.

Investigative: This personality type often excels in mathematics, science, and other analytical fields. Investigative personalities like to think, experiment, analyze, and problem-solve.

Artistic: This type enjoys performance, drawing, singing, writing, painting, music, and/or other expressive and creative arts activities.

Social: This type enjoys acquiring, understanding, teaching, and communicating information.

Enterprising: This type likes to guide, influence, convince, or persuade others. Enterprising personalities enjoy managing or selling things.

Conventional: This type enjoys working with data or finances. Conventional personalities often excel in organizational tasks, are detail oriented, and like well-defined roles with clear goals.

Holland uses the following codes to identify his six work personality types: R = realistic; I = investigative; A= artistic; S = social; E = enterprising; and C = conventional.

7-2 Sample Work Personality

Joaquim's Work Personality

Part 1: Cafeteria Experiment

1. R
2. I
3. C

Work Personality Code= RIC

Part 2: Work Personality Job Analysis

Dominant Work Personality: Realistic

Five jobs or professions

Personal Trainer: This job matches the strongest part of my current skill set, it's a good match for my work personality, and I have really strong interest in it.

Mechanic: I chose this job because I have fairly good skills and it's a great match for my work personality.

Construction Contractor/Plumber: This job matches my skill set (though I would need to hone my plumbing skills a bit) and my work personality. I also like that I could be self-employed as a contractor, which suits my values and wishes for starting my own business.

Chef/Cook/Culinary Arts: This job matches my work personality and interests, but I'm a little weak in the skills department. I cook meals for the family, but know I am "not on the clock!" So, I take my time. I also like to be creative while cooking, but this may be a problem.

Civil Servant: I'm including this job because it matches some of my values, (weaker) skills, and my work personality. However, it's not a great fit for any of them, so it's probably not my best path.

7-3 Assignment: Your Work Personality

Part 1: The Cafeteria Experiment

Now that you have a sense of how Holland has defined his work personality types, here is an activity that will help you determine which of these types are relevant to you. The following activity was designed to help define your work personalities and was adapted from "The Party Exercise" from What Color is Your Parachute by Richard Bolles.

The Experiment

Make an empty list with three spaces numbered 1 through 3.

Imagine you are in a cafeteria where different groups of people sit at six separate tables. Each table is labeled with one of the personality types from this chapter: R for realistic, I for investigative, A for artistic, S for social, E for enterprising, and C for conventional. The people at each table have personalities dominated by the labeled type.

You have to choose which table to sit at. You can't sit in between the tables or in the middle of the cafeteria. Review the personality definitions above and think about which personality type you would most like to sit with. Record this letter next to the number one on your list.

The people you are sitting with at the table all decide to leave the cafeteria after fifteen minutes, and the table will be folded up and put away. You must choose to join a second table. What would be your second choice now that your first one is eliminated? List a second choice next to number two on your created list.

After fifteen minutes, the people you are sitting with at the second table decide to get up and leave as well. This table will be folded up and put away. You will now have to choose a third table to sit at. Think about the work personality types available, and then think about your next choice. Remember, the prior two are no longer available. What table would you choose? List the third choice next to the number three on your list.

Below is Lynda's list of Work Personalities. Using Lynda's list of work personalities as an example, their code is:

2. S

3. I

4. A

Their work code is SIA and it shows that Mike's dominant work personality type is Social.

Now, create your work personality code, your top three choices listed in ranked order. Note your code because it will be referenced throughout this process.

Part 2: Work Personality Job Analysis

For this assignment, you should reflect on your interests, skills, and values to see how they relate to your work personality type. Use your work in the other sections to help create a list of five jobs you believe would suit you. Consider all of the areas we have covered up to this point. You should put your work personality type and work personality code at the top and then list the five jobs.

Module 8: Creating a Working Portfolio System

8-1 Lesson: Supporting Your Job Search with an Organized, Flexible Portfolio

Every job seeker needs a functional and current working portfolio. A portfolio is a collection of materials that are representative of work you have done. The work can be paid, volunteer, full-time, or part-time. Your portfolio is central to your sales pitch when applying for a job or during a job interview.

Your portfolio should:

- show your strongest, most relevant, and most recent work
- be made up of samples carefully selected for the position for which you are interviewing
- present your work in a professional manner

Since each job may require a different set of samples to support your application and interview best, it's a good idea to set up a system to organize your work samples so you can quickly change your portfolio when needed.

Appropriate Work for a Portfolio

Your portfolio can present samples of actual work, examples of writing, positive written comments from teachers and/or other professionals, certificates, awards and endorsements, pictures of you working, and pictures of things you have created. If you were in a play, part of a show, or worked an event for an organization, hand-outs or brochures with your name could be included.

You should save anything that you feel is a good representation of your skills, abilities, and talents. If you think that you don't have enough examples of your work to support a portfolio, this is a prime indication that you need to get involved in more activities or volunteer. Doing so will help generate material for your portfolio and will also help build your always-important network.

Organizing your Portfolio Materials

It's best to select the portfolio items that you feel will best represent you for each specific position and interview. To make that selection process efficient, you should put together a system to keep your portfolio items organized and easy to find. It doesn't have to be complicated.

We recommend using a digital folder on your computer for each year. Within each folder, name folders with major categories (volunteer work, recommendation letters, awards, creative writing) or types of items (articles, programs, design projects).

Your Digital Portfolio

You can create a digital portfolio online with documents about yourself. Creating a QR code to access your website or portfolio is a good idea. You can hand a QR code to someone during an interview or include it in your resume. This will give a potential employer a quick sense of what you do and who you are before the interview. During an interview, handing potential employers tangible evidence of what you are capable of is an interesting, distinctive way to substantiate your answers to questions and even initiate more detailed questions from the interviewer.

As we continue in this course, you will build a simple online digital portfolio that will be useful to you in the future. Be aware of how the digital portfolio can support your job search, and remember to keep your online portfolio updated with your best work.

8-2 Sample Portfolio System

Jamal's Work Portfolio System

In designing my portfolio system, I spent some time thinking about all the information discussed in this section. I will explain my method of keeping these materials organized and easily accessible.

1. I will label the folders by year, and I will then have subfolders in each year using the following categories:

Work Examples

- reports, papers, assignments, projects, writing samples

Certificates, Awards, and Evaluations

- Certificates, awards, evaluations, training verification forms, transcripts, report cards, and other credential materials
 - Playbills that note my name as an Assistant Director, the brochure about the organization I volunteered for, flyers that mention me, and other promotional materials.
2. I will collect any paper materials in a large box with dividers similar to my digital structure.

8-3 Assignment: Build Your Portfolio System

Create and organize your digital portfolio. The goal is to develop a system that will make it easy and fast to find your materials whenever needed.

1. Identify the categories you will use to keep your files organized and provide a few examples of what will be contained in each category.
2. Explain how you will name the folders and categories.

Module 9: Self-Analysis Report

9-1 Lesson: Looking Back on the Work You've Completed in Course 1

During this course, you did a lot of work on self-assessment, including exploring your interests, strengths, weaknesses, skills, values, and work personalities. You created, defined, and organized your network and set up a portfolio system, which will greatly help you throughout your job search.

Now it's time to reflect on what you've learned and create a self-analysis report. This report will summarize all of the areas we have covered in the Modules of Course 1. If you've completed all your assignments, it should be easy to put together.

You can use this report in later lessons to help you determine how specific careers might fit your interests, strengths, skills, values, and work personalities. In the future, when looking at jobs and their duties, you can refer to the self-analysis report to help you identify how suitable a given position is for you. When preparing for an interview, reviewing the report will remind you of your strengths and areas to stress when interviewing. Over time, it will be helpful to go back and update the report as your skills, values, strengths, interests, and career goals evolve.

9-2 Sample Self-Analysis Report

Tania's Self-Analysis Report

1. Personal Network: Mom, Jack (stepbrother), John (brother), Jim (partner), Tim (cousin), Uncle Tom, Mark and Vanessa (neighbors), Vincent and Loretta (neighbors), Jason, Mark, Tom, Joan, Sally, Marco, Sandra, Janet (friends), Mr. Pratt, Ms. Lacin, Mr. and Mrs. Correa (family friends)
2. Feedback from Others (Strengths): Talented at sewing, organized, hardworking, honest, helpful, dependable, practical, good with assistive technology, and basic computer skills
3. Interests: Sewing, watching movies with friends, reading mystery books, swimming, listening to punk rock music, camping with friends, going to concerts, doing research, clothing design, and computers
4. Skills/Abilities: Sewing, designing, and creating clothing; basic computer skills; swimming, teaching swimming; proficiency in speaking German; good listening skills; and good math skills
5. Values: family, friends, health, stability, and school
6. Work Personality Code (Holland's Code): A, R, C

9-3 Assignment: Conduct Your Self-Analysis

Using your prior work from Course 1, create a comprehensive self-analysis in the following areas.

1. Personal network
2. Feedback from others
3. Interests
4. Skills/abilities
5. Values
6. Work personality

CONGRATULATIONS! You have reached the end of Course 1: Self-Awareness.

Please be sure to save the assignments you have completed.

Please continue to...

Course 2: Career Exploration: Resources and Methods

COURSE 2: Career Exploration – Resources and Methods

[Introduction to the Job Seeker's Toolkit](#)

The Job Seeker's Toolkit aims to help you acquire essential skills necessary for successful employment. The skills and topics reviewed will help you move towards a successful job search and beyond. The Job Seeker's Toolkit, through a series of five courses, will help in building your own toolkit to assist you in preparing for the world of work.

The five courses are structured into modules and activities that build on the content and exercises of the preceding material. For this reason, we recommend working your way through the courses in chronological order and completing each assignment along the way. However, if you have an interview tomorrow, feel free to skip ahead for tips!

The effort you put into building your own Toolkit will provide you with a foundation fundamental for success in the world of work.

The Job Seeker's Toolkit is built to accompany you through the job search and the employment lifecycle, from building self-awareness to determining the best-fit career path, identifying employment opportunities, preparing for an interview, all the way to maintaining employment and advancing your career.

Course 2: Career Exploration – Methods and Resources is all about exploring the career options that best fit your interests, skills, and education.

Course 2: Career Exploration – Resources and Methods

[Module 1: Career Exploration Resources](#)

[1-1 Lesson: Identifying the Best Research Resources to Support a Job Search](#)

Effective research depends on the quality of sources rather than the quantity of sources. Think about tools, media, or resources that can most effectively support informational interviewing and job search activities.

This section provides information on various common sources of job search assistance and a little about what each may offer. These sources are good starting points for the first phase of research. However, it will become apparent that lots of factors come into play. So, tailoring things for your specific situation is necessary. You will see some other factors and sources can assist as well.

[APH CareerConnect®](#)

You may be familiar with the APH ConnectCenter and its career-focused section, APH CareerConnect. APH CareerConnect is a free online resource for people who want to learn about the range and diversity of jobs

performed by people who are blind or low vision. You can find the site at www.aphconnectcenter.org. You can also view past webinars on the YouTube channel [APH ConnectCenter - YouTube](#).

NSITE Connect

The right job is out there, regardless of your field or skills. New opportunities for people who are blind or low vision and/or veterans are posted all the time, each with the workplace environment, leadership, and accommodations to help you succeed. Use NSITE Connect to explore career opportunities and browse open positions nationwide shared by more than 40 employers. [Access the NSITE Connect Job Board](#).

Libraries

The public library is an important resource for any job seeker. At the local library, you can find books to download to an eReader in audio or other formats, access major online research databases, and find information and guidance related to your field of interest and geographic area.

Another library option would be a school library. Whether it is a high school, vocational/trade school, or a university, the library is a good source for career information. They may provide access to even more online resources specific to the majors they specialize in.

A reference librarian is trained to assist in locating resources and sources of information. They also may be able to help target your search so you receive the best results for the information you are seeking.

Career Centers

Career Centers help people perform research to support professional goals. A Career Center may be housed under the Department of Labor or Economic Development Division in your state, county, or township. A Career Center is a source for job listings, information on resume writing, interviewing skills, etc. They maintain a database of available jobs in their given geographic area and can frequently provide information on jobs within their state or region.

Colleges, universities, and vocational schools often have career centers, though they may only be available for those currently enrolled in their courses or alums. It is best to do some online research to find out what is available. To find a local Career Center, search online for a local "One Stop," "Career Center," "American Job Center," or "Employment Center".

Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

Vocational rehabilitation agencies assist people with disabilities in preparing for entry or re-entry into the workforce. In some states, the agency may only serve people who are blind, and in other states, services are provided through a cross-disability model for all people with all disabilities.

Vocational rehabilitation agencies assist state residents legally authorized to work in the United States. They can help you improve your daily living skills, enhance your productivity at work through technology, and acquire essential skills for people with blindness, such as orientation and mobility, braille, and assistive technology. To find a local or state agency near you, use the APH Directory of Services at [Home - ConnectCenter \(aphconnectcenter.org\)](http://aphconnectcenter.org).

O*NET Online

The [O*NET Online](#) website provides the latest statistics about various occupational fields. The site is a part of

the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Explore their website for information related to your career: <http://www.onetonline.org>.

The United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics

The U.S. Bureau provides information on the economics, education, and future outlook for careers. Vocational Rehabilitation often wants to know if there is a need for people to enter into a field. It is helpful to research career information, such as if a job market is "tight" as a prospective job applicant. Visit <https://www.bls.gov/>.

Next Steps: Review a Sample Resource Log and complete the assignment by preparing a log and obtaining information to put into the record.

1-2 Sample Resource Log

Thomas's Resource Log: Organizations

Name of organization or agency: Local Library of ANY Town

Address: 123 Knowledge Way

Website: tes: University Library system; access to almost all services is available to community members; limited borrowing privileges

Resources available: Librarians, online databases and periodicals, job boards, research assistance, digital references, and job postings

Name of organization or agency: Community Library

Address: 456 Main Street

Website:

Notes: Local branch library and online resources through the Leon County Public Library System.

Resources available: digital books, databases, librarians, and workshops

Name of organization or agency: FSU Career Center

Address: 987 Franklin Ct.

Website:

Notes: Online and in-person career assistance. Most of their resources are available to me. I have an appointment for an orientation.

Resources available: Everything except on-campus and online events are organized for current students. Job boards, interview preparation, resume review, career guidance, online FAQs, and advice.

Name of organization or agency: State Commission or Division of Blind Services

Address: Main Street

Website: w w w

Notes: Currently a client of services for the blind in their Transition program. My counselor, Mr. Vasquez, is available by phone or email for questions and answers. I am required to meet at a minimum of once per year

in-person. I can choose to include my parents and teacher of the visually impaired in meetings.

I am working with my transition counselor at the Florida Division of Blind Services, who helps me make sure that I am getting the services needed, including work experience, and who ensures I know what other opportunities are available. My counselor actually introduced me to this online course.

Thomas Malcum's Resource Log: Websites

Web Address: www.aphconnectcenter.org/careers

Company/Organization: APH ConnectCenter

Section of the Site: APH CareerConnect

Title of Article or Page: For Job Seekers

Notes: Lots of advice for people who are blind or low vision related to employment. They have blogs and articles on job seeking, networking, etc., and they interview and introduce successful professionals who are blind or have low vision.

1-3 Assignment: Career Exploration Resources

Part 1: Setting up a Resource Log

Before investigating research resources in earnest, establish a way of organizing the agencies and information by putting together a resource log. The choice is yours; what works best for you may be an Excel spreadsheet or a simple text document with pertinent information. The log should be easy to enter and contain information in an organized manner. You will want to update information regularly to keep the data current and accurate.

A job search log will help quickly find important information, sources, and contacts who provided information that may be useful later.

One option would be to create a folder on your computer or notetaker called "Employment Resource Log." Within that folder, create separate documents for each kind of information you will be recording. Examples might be: "Contacts," "Organizations," "Books," "Articles," "Emails," "Websites," "Podcasts", and "Miscellaneous."

The key is to ensure the system developed is logical and you know where to put information, thus, allowing for retrieval quickly later on. The more organized your log is, the better off you will be.

For each resource, think about what is necessary to capture. Consider the recording the title of the resource, book, company, podcast, etc.

What is needed to access the source in the future? Record the website, phone number, and/or social media account. Also, make a brief note as to what you learned while reading or listening to the information.

The lists below will get you started but do not hesitate to add or customize the information you record based on your experience.

Organizations

- Name of organization or agency
- Address
- Website

- Description
- Resources available

Books

- Title
- Author
- Page or Chapter
- Notes

Websites

- Web address
- Company/Organization
- Section of the site
- Title of the article or page
- Author (if attributed)
- Notes

Contacts

- First and last name
- Organization
- Job Title
- Phone Number
- Email Address
- Notes

Part 2: Review Your Resource Log

Now that a system has been established for tracking information, review the system to ensure you are comfortable with the system. Make changes if needed for clarity and ease of access. Familiarize yourself with the resources in your community and beyond. Where are your libraries, Career Centers, and vocational rehabilitation agencies? What services do these organizations offer? Fill out a resource log form for each of the resources identified.

Module 2: Starting a Job Analysis

2-1 Lesson: Laying the Groundwork for a Detailed Job Analysis

A job analysis is the process through which a job seeker collects information on the duties, responsibilities, necessary skills, growth opportunities, knowledge, and environment and atmosphere relating to a specific job.

A job analysis collects information from various sources and creates a picture of a position that can be used to determine if a job is truly a good fit. To perform a thorough job analysis, identify the job you want to learn more about. Obtain information from online sources, people working in the career, and organizations.

At the beginning of your job analysis, look for basic information such as job title, duties, field/profession, qualifications (training, certifications, and required professional experience), salary, geographic locations, and types of companies.

Job Descriptions

A job description summarizes an organization's expectations for what the job entails. A job description states typical job duties and the following:

- Types of skills-special training, certification, or degrees preferred or required to perform the job
- The reporting structures
- Wage information
- Status (full-time/part-time, remote options, temporary/permanent)
- Hours
- Location of position

Job descriptions are often listed in part in job postings, job boards, or on professional organization websites. Understanding the information contained in job descriptions is a central aspect of job analysis.

The types of tasks, duties, and requirements detailed in a job description provide much information. Jobs that may be considered higher-level skilled positions are usually associated with higher wages and more extensive experience, training, and/or education. It is important to remember that published job descriptions are not complete job descriptions containing all of your job duties. An official job description is available through an employer.

Other Sources of Basic Information

In addition to posted or published job descriptions, other resources provide both basic and detailed information.

Your Resource Log

You previously reviewed several research sources and ways to record the information. Review your Resource Log. Where do you think you can find information on specific positions?

APH CareerConnect

[CareerConnect® - ConnectCenter \(aphconnectcenter.org\)](https://aphconnectcenter.org) can be a resource for starting a job analysis. You can read [Useful Links for Job Seekers Who Are Blind or Low Vision - ConnectCenter \(aphconnectcenter.org\)](#) and

browse job boards, job search tools, and resources. Your search results often provide detailed career information similar to what you would find in a job description.

NSITE Connect

You can use [NSITE Connect](#) to explore information about specific employers, peruse job descriptions, or access additional resources and testimonials from other job seekers.

O*-NET and the Bureau of Labor Statistics are also good sources.

Next Steps: Review a Sample Job Information Form and complete the assignment by setting up your own.

2-2 Sample Job Information Form

Barbara's Job Information Form

Common Job Title(s): Paralegal, Legal Assistant, Legal Investigator, Patent Agent

Primary Job Duties: Assist lawyers via research, documentation, and case preparation. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding. Handle legal correspondence and maintain organization of documents in an established paper or electronic system. Prepare briefs, pleadings, appeals, wills, contracts, etc. Contact witnesses and meet with clients. Investigate facts and law of cases and conduct background research. Direct and coordinate law office activity. File pleadings. Gather and analyze research data, such as statutes, decisions, and legal articles. Ensure the law library is up to date.

Required Education and/or Certification(s): Training in vocational school, related on-the-job experience, or an Associate's degree. Some programs have you complete an internship.

Required Professional Experience: One or two years of experience; might have a formal apprenticeship structure; joined a professional organization to network in the field of paralegal work as well as to expand knowledge.

Other Qualifications (special computer skills, languages, etc.): Use of legal databases case management applications and applications Thomson Reuters Westlaw, Lexis+, Lexis for Microsoft Office, Lexis Advance Quicklaw, Thomson Reuters Practical Law. Knowledge of computers, hardware, and software.

Position this Job Reports to: Lawyer, Partner in a Law Firm, Other Manager

Hours: Full-time

Location: nationwide

Salary: \$59,200

Job and/or Industry Outlook: Next 10 years a 4% increase. Average compared with other professions.

Other Information: Salaries depend on geographic area and work experience.

Questions to ask an employee in this field:

- Is your firm large or small? Response: Small
- What applications, databases, and software specific to your field do you use? Response: All major legal databases plus local property databases.
- Can you give me an example of your workday? Response: Works part time for a few hours each morning Monday-Friday.
- Is there variety in what you do from day to day? Response: Yes.
- How did you get your job? Response: Assistance from a teacher in the certification program.
- What education or training specific to your career do you have? Response Certification.
- What are your goals related to future employment? Response: Full time work when I am able to locate something near my home.

2-3 Assignment: Job Analysis

The goal of this assignment is to begin to methodically collect information about the job you are most interested in exploring.

Choose the Job You'd Like to Analyze

In Course 1, you did a lot of work identifying your skills, interests, personality, and values. In an earlier assignment, you listed five jobs or professions that you thought might match your work personality.

Revisit that assignment and think about which positions seem the best fit for what you learned in your self-assessment. Choose the one you are most interested in.

The Job Information Form

A Job Information Form is reproduced below to help you consider what information is critical to capture at the start of your analysis. The form is meant to be used as a guide. Customize the form to reflect any job- or field-specific information or anything else you want to know.

Completing the Job Information Form will give you a deeper understanding of each position you are interested in

and prepare you for the tasks you will be undertaking later in this module. In the next sections, you will be establishing a relationship with a mentor, setting up an informational interview, and finding an organization that will allow you to do an occupational observation. As you learn more about the position, you will want to keep a record of the questions you want to ask the people involved in these next steps.

Begin the assignment by finding a job description and comparing it with what you locate on O*-NET. Does the description match what you locate? If not, you might want to compare a few different job descriptions with what you locate through O*NET.

If you can locate a similar job on either APH CareerConnect or through NSITE, compare it with what you found above.

Be sure to take good notes. Remember to continue to add to the resource log as you identify sources of information.

Template JOB INFORMATION FORM:

Common Job Title (s):

Major Job Duties:

Required Education and/or Certification(s):

Required Professional Experience:

Other Qualifications (special computer skills, languages, etc.):

Position this Job Reports to:

Hours:

Location:

Would remote work be possible? Yes/No.

Salary:

Job and/or Industry Outlook:

Other Information:

Questions to ask a worker in this field: Unless the person you are speaking with is blind or low vision, they most likely may not know about accessing technology with screen enlargement or a screen reader.

Module 3: Finding a Job Mentor

3-1: Lesson: Contacting a Mentor

Many successful people will say that there have been important individuals who have influenced their career path. Often, they will view the person providing career advice, offered support, or an experienced perspective throughout their professional lives as a mentor. These mentors are crucial members of any professional's support system. Some mentor relationships will develop naturally over the course of one's career. Yet, when job hunting for the first time, it is a very good idea to seek out a mentor in your field of interest actively.

Contacting Mentors

Below is a list of tips on contacting mentors and some questions you may want to ask your mentor(s) once you have established a connection. It is important to limit yourself to a few thoughtfully chosen questions so that your mentor can spend their time on the topics that are most important to you.

Let the mentor know you would like to learn more about their work. You may ask your own questions or use some of those listed below.

- Thank the mentor for their time and for answering your questions.
- You never know where you will make good professional contacts. Spell-check any written messages before sending.
- Be appropriate in your behavior and language. Act in a manner that demonstrates you are serious about your job search.
- If you are contacting a mentor via the phone, being appropriate, gracious, and polite is just as important. Act in a manner that shows you are serious about your job search.

Sample Questions

Out of respect for a mentor's time, write a list of questions to ask. Be sure to have the questions in a format you can easily read to the mentor. Also, be prepared to take notes during the session. If you are not comfortable taking notes, check with your mentor to see if it is ok for you to record the question-and-answer session.

Review the questions that you came up with above. Think about the most important to you right now at the beginning of your job analysis.

The following list may contain a question or two you would like to include at this stage. DO NOT copy and paste all the questions below and immediately send them to a mentor. Consider what you want to know about the mentor's job and let the conversation evolve from there.

- How did you find your job?
- How long have you had your job?
- Where did you receive your training for this job?
- What jobs did you have before this one?
- Did you take vocational courses in high school, college, or trade school that you recommend I consider?
- Did you participate in an internship or an apprenticeship?

- Does your present company offer on-the-job training?
- What is a typical starting salary for your job in your region?
- What is your typical workday like?
- What related jobs do you know of that I might want to investigate?
- What are your current career goals?

If your potential mentor is blind or low vision, here are some specific questions that they may be able to answer:

- How do you get to and from work?
- How do you perform your job duties?
- Do you use specialized tools or equipment to perform your job duties?
- How did you finance the purchase of any specialized equipment you use on the job?
- Where and from whom did you receive training in how to operate the tools you use to perform your job?

After Contacting a Mentor

Some mentors will be quick to respond to your message or phone call. Others may take some time to get back to you, and some may not be able to respond at all. Be patient and remember that mentors are working professionals and often have limited time.

Mentorship doesn't end after asking a few questions.

Fostering mentor relationships with people in all aspects of your life can be a great way to form a support system and build your network. There is no reason to limit yourself to only one or one type of mentor. As your life progresses and your goals change, you may find new people to help guide and serve as role models. They may be in your field or outside it, blind or low vision or sighted, far more experienced than you, or only moderately so. Each of these relationships can prove valuable to you, providing different perspectives on the same subject or offering different types of advice altogether. The more varied your mentor relationships are, the more beneficial it will be as a mentee.

In addition to the benefits of advice and support, mentors have their own personal and professional networks. At various points along your career path, one or more of your mentors may be able to offer connections that could benefit your job search. We have discussed the importance of expanding your network; this is just another way to accomplish this task.

When you think about it, almost anyone can be a mentor: your parents, siblings, friends, teachers, colleagues, even acquaintances. Developing a new mentor relationship can be easy. Ask for advice and guidance and be appreciative when you receive it. Most people are glad to share their experiences and support younger or less experienced colleagues or friends.

Get out there and get connected to other mentors!

Next Steps: Review the Sample Mentor Resource Log Record and Updated Information Form and complete the assignment.

3-2 Sample Mentor Resource Log and Updated Information Form

Barbara's Mentor Resource Log Record and Updated Job Information Form - After Mentor Interview

Contact Name: Laura Smith

Organization: Smith Jones and

Mejia, LLC.

Job Title: paralegal

Relationship to You: Mentor

Phone Number: 555-555-5555

Email Address: emailforyou@email.com

Description: Laura is a paralegal located in Mississippi. She was responsive to my query for an interview.

Job Information Form: Updated on December 2023

Common Job Title(s): Paralegal, Legal Assistant, Legal Investigator, Patent Agent

Primary Job Duties: Assist lawyers via research, document, and case preparation. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding. Handle legal correspondence and maintain the organization of documents in an established paper or electronic system. Prepare briefs, pleadings, appeals, wills, contracts, etc. Contact witnesses and meet with clients. Investigate facts and law of cases and conduct background research. Direct and coordinate law office activity. File pleadings. Gather and analyze research data, such as statutes, decisions, and legal articles.

Required Education and/or Certification(s): Training in vocational school, related on-the-job experience, or an Associate's degree. Usually need one or two years of training.

Required Professional Experience: One or two years of experience; might have a formal apprenticeship structure

Other Qualifications (special computer skills, languages, etc.): Fluency with computers, hardware, and software and use of legal websites.

Position this Job Reports to: Lawyer, Partner in a Law Firm, Other Manager

Hours: Full-time

Location: Everywhere

Salary: \$59,200 annual median nationwide

Job and/or Industry Outlook: Next 10 years increase by 4%. Same as other fields.

Other Information: Laura stated that her firm is constantly seeking good paralegals and has a system where someone like me can get on-the-job training as long as I get at least an associate's degree in the field.

Questions to ask a worker in this field:

- What technology would be required for work in this field? Computer skills.
- What are your hours usually like? She finds that she often works more than a 40-hour work week. And the kinds of cases also dictate the schedule. Everyone is required to contribute when the firm has a heavy caseload. She has to come in early sometimes when she is informed that something is needed before noon the next day. It is the paralegal's job to ensure that everything is set for upcoming cases.
- Is there a lot of variety in what you do from day to day? She handles all different aspects of cases

and documents. She is polylingual and sometimes
Is required to translate documents or compare
both sets of documents for accuracy. (This is not
the job of a paralegal directly. Yet, since she
reads, writes, and speaks three languages other
than English, her employer uses this skill of hers.)

- What is the size firm, large or small? There are 15
full-time lawyers who also take law students,
adding about ten more staff. They currently have
18 paralegals.
- How did you get your job? She showed interest in law and was connected with a family friend. While in high school, she took phone calls and scheduled appointments after school four days per week. Once she started college, she volunteered at a law clinic to get different experiences and learn more about what a paralegal does daily. She was placed at a law firm to complete credit hours as part of her education. She continued with this firm for another year after completing school. She saw the job opening for the firm she currently works at through a professional group she belongs to.
- What sort of preparation did you have? Laura had initial learning while in high school. She also learned a lot from her volunteer job at the law clinic. Her current employer was impressed with her volunteer work. She feels that being highly organized assisted her in college and now at work. She said she had to learn a lot about basic law procedures quickly to get up to speed. She read a lot at home because there was often little time at work. Her firm was accommodating of her need to use assistive technology.

3-3 Assignment: Job Mentor

Contact Mentors

Thank your mentor for their time, and let them know you would like to ask them a few questions. Ask a few thoughtful questions at the beginning of your interaction and see how things progress from there.

Make sure to set up a resource log record for each of your mentor contacts.

Expand your Job Information Form with the information you learn in your interview. Fill in the gaps you could not locate through other means or start a new section for each mentor so you can record their background, training, education, past employment, and experiences with the job.

Module 4: The Informational Interview

4-1 Lesson: Conducting an Interview with a Professional in a Field of Interest

Informational interviews are meetings to answer questions about a field or position. These types of interviews are conducted with workers who are willing and able to take the time to speak with you and share their experiences. The person you interview should be enthusiastic about their career and share their journey with you.

The sole purpose of an informational interview is to educate you about a given job or career. Information gathering is intended to enable you, the interviewer, to see if your interests are still in the area of the job of the person you have interviewed.

Informational interviews can provide a wealth of information about the duties and responsibilities required to work in a given field. They also offer the opportunity to find out how a real-world business defines the role of the type of position being investigated. It will be important to be persistent and to contact multiple organizations to find a company or employee willing to take the time to speak with you. Not all positions with similar titles will have the same range of duties at different organizations or even within the same organization. Businesses continuously tailor their positions to meet changing business needs and/or to take advantage of individual employees' strengths, aptitudes, and interests.

During the process of an informational interview, you may find that your expectations for a job are different from the daily reality of the position. Do not give up on a specific field. Find someone else to interview in the same field but who is working at a different company.

APH ConnectCenter hosts informational interviews called Career Conversations. They are live webinars recorded for our YouTube channel. The individuals that we interview are blind or low vision and are working in different fields.

4-2 Setting up an Informational Interview

Below are tips to assist with the process of setting up and conducting an informational interview.

Tips

Finding Contacts

- Think of the people in your network. Have you already connected with individuals who might be able to help you connect with appropriate organizations or businesses? Building on an existing contact is always easier than starting fresh with someone new. Ask around: you might be surprised by who has connections in your field of interest.
- Search online for professional organizations in the field of interest. Contact businesses that employ individuals to do the work you want to learn about.
- Think about how and when you want to interview someone. Will the interview be virtual or in-person? If the interview is in person, do you need transportation? Is there information you need to provide to the facility before your arrival? (Your name, a contact number, etc.)
- If performing the informational interview in person, consider the safety of the location. Is there a place for you to wait for a ride?

- Compile a list of the organizations identified that seem appropriate and accessible to you. Be sure to have their phone and email contact information.

Before contacting the organization, think about what you want to say. Here are some questions to consider.

- Describe the purpose of the interview.
- Describe the information being sought: Job title, other areas of interest, observing the work area possible.
- Would interviewing more than one person be possible?
- How much time do you expect to need? (An informational interview is usually about an hour long. Remember that the informational interview will take time from your interviewee's workday.)
- Are there specific responsibilities that you would like to be able to see firsthand? For instance, if the position requires customer or client contact, ask if you can interview during standard business hours to observe how customer interactions are handled. Remember that privacy laws may prevent you from observing conversations between certain professionals and their clients.

Not all organizations or workers will be open to an informational interview.

When You Call or Email

- Remember to be polite and professional with everyone you speak to.
- Take notes about the places that you have had contact with. Be sure to obtain the names and contact information of people with whom contact has been made. Make a brief note to yourself about the outcome.
- Be sure to update your resource log; it may be necessary to contact them again in the future.
- If a company does not allow for informational interviews, be gracious and ask if they might know of other local companies in the same field that you could contact.
- If a company is willing to set up an interview, ask if they can supply you with any background materials that might help you prepare. If you do not know about the individual to whom you will be speaking, ask for some basic information: job title, history with the company, etc.

Before the Interview

- Schedule your transportation well before the interview date, and ensure you will arrive early. If the company requires that you fill out paperwork for confidentiality or other matters, ask if it can be emailed to you before your appointment.
- Make sure you have appropriate attire for the workplace you will be visiting. If you are not sure about the dress code, ask!
- If doing the informational interview virtually, understand how to use the platform on which the interview will happen.

Preparing for and Conducting the Informational Interview

- Thorough preparation is essential for a successful occupational interview. Do diligent background research about the company.

- Pay careful attention to their website. Familiarize yourself with the products, services, or activities that are central to the business.
- Have a clear understanding of what you want to learn. An hour might sound like a long time, but it can go by quickly.
- Put together a list of questions well before the interview and review, edit, combine, and add to it regularly.
- Look at the questions on the Job Information Form and the mentor questions. Can some of these questions be used in the informational interview?
- Make sure to ask about job duties that may not be typical to the position or shared by coworkers in the office. Note the tasks mentioned and think about how you might accomplish them.
- Your clothing should be appropriate for the workplace where the observation is being conducted. Practice good hygiene before the observation or any employer interaction.

Tips for the Interview

- Be ten minutes early or on time for your appointment.
- Be positive.
- Be polite and gracious.
- Act in a professional manner.
- Use appropriate language.
- If allowed, take notes. If not, pay attention and make yourself notes once the interview is over.
- Use any access technology in a professional manner; you may want to describe assistive technology.
- Make sure you are not a distraction.
- Be prepared to answer questions.

After the Interview

- Keep track of the contact information for the person you spoke to. It's very important to thank the interviewee for taking the time to meet.
- If you say you will keep in contact and update the person on your job search, keep in touch! You never know where job leads will come from, and this person could become part of your personal network. You could send a message to the organization, mentioning how great the person was for allowing you to do an informational interview and how helpful the experience was for you. Employers always like to know positive information and hear compliments about their employees.

Next Steps: Review the Sample Resource Log Record and Updated Job Information Form – After Mentor and Occupational Interview below, and then complete the assignment.

[4-3 Sample Mentor Resource Log Record and Updated Job Information – After Mentor and Occupational Interview](#)

[Barbara's Mentor Resource Log Record and Updated Job Information Form - After Mentor and Occupational Interview](#)

Contact name: Lindsey Chapin

Organization: Barlow and Smythe

Job Title: Paralegal

Relationship to You: paralegal who agreed to do an informational interview

Phone Number: 555-555-5555 Email Address:

Description: 1st informational interview subject. Job Information

Form: Updated

Common Job Title(s): Paralegal, Legal Assistant, Legal Investigator, Patent Agent

Primary Job Duties: Assist lawyers via research, document, and case preparation. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding. Handle legal correspondence and maintain the organization of documents in an established paper or electronic system. Prepare briefs, pleadings, appeals, wills, contracts, etc. Contact witnesses, and meet with clients. Investigate facts and law of cases and conduct background research. Direct and coordinate law office activity and schedule tasks associated with cases. File pleadings. Gather and analyze research data, such as statutes, decisions, and legal articles. Ensure the law library is up to date.

Required Education and/or Certification(s): Training in vocational school, related on the job experience, or an Associate's degree. Usually need one or two years of training.

Required Professional Experience: One or two years of experience; might have a formal apprenticeship structure

Other Qualifications (special computer skills, languages, etc.): Fluency with computers, hardware, and software.

Position this Job Reports to: Lawyer, Partner in a Law Firm, Other Manager

Hours: Full-time

Location: Everywhere

Salary: \$59,200

Job and/or Industry Outlook: 4 percent growth projected over the next ten years.

Other Information: My mentor Laura says that her firm is constantly seeking good paralegals and that they have a system where someone like me can get on the job training as long as I am getting at least an associate degree in the field.

Questions to ask a worker in this field:

What access technology would be required for work in this field? In the informational interview, Lindsey spent some time describing to me the types of work that she has to do. She asked me questions about what sort of access technology I use and then we both talked about what may be required to be a paralegal. It seems pretty straightforward-I would need a screen reader and Optical Character Recognition for type written correspondents and maybe some assistance with the paper filing system.

What are your hours usually like? Laura says that paralegals often work very long hours when the firm has a heavy case load. The paralegals at her firm are busy all the time and often come in early or stay late to make

sure that everything is set for upcoming cases. Lindsey said that the hours are often really long but that it is fun if you like the feeling of working hard to meet a deadline.

Is there a lot of variety in what you do from day to day? Lindsey said that while there is a lot of variety in the work she does, often there are several days in a row that are consumed with filing, paperwork, and taking care of office management tasks. She said that every now and again it can get boring or repetitive, but that is more than made up for by the fact that you get to see some pretty interesting cases.

Is your firm large or small? Small firm. Lindsey talked about how she chose a small firm specifically because she wanted to feel like she was part of a team and not just a cog in a huge organization. The trade-off is that she does not make as high a salary as some of her friends at the larger firms.

How did you get your job? Lindsey herself started answering phones, volunteered, and then began working while in college.

Lindsey found the job listing at her Career Center and, after sending out some feelers to her network, found out that one of her professors knew someone needing a paralegal. The professor put in a good word for Lindsey after she applied for the job. She said the interview was pretty tough, but everyone was nice.

What sort of preparation did you have? Lindsey learned on the job. She had very good computer skills and was highly organized, two important things for paralegals. She said that she had to learn a lot about basic law procedures very quickly in order to get up to speed. She read a lot at home because there was often not enough time at work. Her firm was accommodating of her blindness and did not have a problem with her using assistive technology.

Lindsey had spent a summer as a paralegal between her junior and senior years, so she had some training already. She has always wanted to be in the law field, so she majored in pre-law in college and had some good preparation and familiarity with a lot of basic law.

What are your goals for the future? Lindsey is applying to law school. She will become a lawyer and hopes to partner in her own firm one day.

Are there any special skills you need to do this work? Lindsey said it would be best to understand how Lexis/Nexus, an online law literature database, works. She said she uses it all the time, and you have to be fast and efficient when looking things up. She also said that since the lawyer she works for specializes in labor law, she needs to be able to support that work with good knowledge about the field as well.

4-4 Assignment: Informational Interviews

Conduct at least one informational interview with a professional working in the job you are analyzing. Be sure to incorporate the information learned into the resource log.

Module 5: Job Observation

5-1 Lesson: Conducting a Job Observation

Few experiences will be more valuable than observing a job of interest. Observing a job for a few hours or a full day can be valuable, exciting, and informative. Aside from actually doing a job yourself, job observation is one of the best ways to learn about the realities of any position.

Job observations require much more time commitment from the employee who will be observed and the company they work for. It might be challenging to find a company willing to offer this opportunity. Be persistent; use your network. Ask your mentor for contacts or ideas about places you might query. Check with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to see if they have had anyone work in the field for which the observation will be.

During your observation, it is important not to judge, criticize, or comment on what you observe. Your goal as an observer is not to assess how the work is being performed but to learn as much as possible about the job. Silent observers are the best kind of observers! Ask questions related to the work when possible.

Look at the required duties and responsibilities and think about whether or not the reality of the position is appealing.

Remember to express your gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to observe. A thank you note is appropriate after this type of experience.

Next Steps: Review the Sample Job Observation Report and Reflection below and complete the assignment.

5-2 Sample Job Observation Report and Reflection

Barbara's Job Observation Report and Reflection

I wanted to do an observation at a law firm that is medium to large. I hope to be working in a medium to large-sized firm. Laura helped me set up an observation at Sato, Lomanaco, and Partners, where I could observe one of their paralegals, Simon Craig.

Simon was patient and helpful and took a lot of time out of his day to explain everything to me, which I was not expecting. It was a totally different feel than the other office. The firm is large enough. There are eight partners, two junior partners, and seven staff attorneys. The paralegals are all working in one section of the office. None of the paralegals had a real office; they were all at open workstations and cubicles. There did not seem to be much face time with the lawyers. Communication was either by phone or email.

I was really surprised by how much paperwork Simon had to do. His desk was piled with stacks of paper, and he said I was seeing him on a good day! Just when I was there today, file boxes for three new cases were dropped off at his desk. He spent a lot of time filing, copying, and documenting various procedural issues for about seven cases. He said he really liked the job but found it very stressful at times because each attorney has a different way of doing things, and it was hard to keep everyone straight sometimes. I had been thinking that each lawyer would have an assigned paralegal, but apparently, the way this firm does it is that most paralegals work for all of the junior partners and staff attorneys.

The partners each have an assigned paralegal, but they also can pull from the paralegal "pool" any time they need extra support. There were about 20 paralegals, and everyone seemed really, really busy. The

environment felt a little tense at times, and I overheard one of the paralegals talking to someone who seemed really angry about a mistake the paralegal had made. It also seemed pretty exciting, though. Simon said that he liked the cases he worked on—they were complex and interesting, and he had learned a lot. He plans to go on to be a lawyer, and he said that he felt his job was preparing him well for the future.

I liked the energy in the office, and I felt that everyone was working hard and being productive. I observed Simon issue a subpoena and make several calls to witnesses who will be needed for upcoming trials. It was all very interesting and varied work.

I am still interested in becoming a paralegal, though I think I might aim to get hired at a mid-range firm. Sato and Partners seemed a little too stressful as a place to start. Maybe after a few years under my belt in a smaller environment, I will move up to a larger firm or get my law degree.

The work is definitely a good match for my skills, personality, and values. I like that there is a good degree of interaction with various people, and I also like how much organization is required. I will enjoy working as a paralegal if I can find the right firm.

5-3 Assignment: Job Observation

Locate and set up an appropriate job observation. Support your search for an observation with good research and requests for help to your network.

The points and questions provided below are offered as guidance for your observation. What else are you interested in learning? Make sure to take good notes, either while you are observing, immediately after the observation is finished, or when you are in a place where you can concentrate.

- What job tasks are performed?
- What methods are used to accomplish job tasks?
- What technology is utilized in job tasks?
- What specific computer applications are utilized to accomplish the job?
- Where is the job performed?
- Is travel to clients, conferences, or meetings part of the job?
- What was the physical location of the job like, such as lighting, space, desk set-up, and number of people in the office?
- What is the atmosphere or feeling in the work environment?
- Does the employee interact with coworkers?
- Does the employee interact with customers?
- Does the employee use the phone to perform their duties?
- Is the phone system and other office equipment accessible?
- Are documents written in handwriting?
- Are hours able to be flexed?
- What percentage of the day is spent interacting with others?
- Does the person stand for long periods of the day?
- Is the employee required to lift things? If so, are these objects manageable for you?
- What hours and days does the employee work?
- Can parts of the job be done remotely? Why/why not?
- Is this a typical day on the job?

- Are there tasks that you would find difficult to perform? Which? How does the employee perform the tasks?
- How quickly are tasks performed? Is speed in performing job tasks a requirement? Will performing tasks require speed when applying for this type of job?
- What skills or training would you need to fulfill the duties successfully? Is the training something that you expected to be necessary? Could you get this training?
- Could you learn the skills you see being used in the job?
- Is the supervisor on site?
- How many employees work in the location?

For your assignment, take some time to think about how closely this observation paralleled the ideas about the job. Were there any surprises? What is exciting about the job? Any disappointments? Do you still think this position matches your skills, personality, and values well? Are you still interested in this type of work? Explain why or why not.

Module 6: Discrepancy Analysis

6-1 Lesson: Determine Whether You Are Moving in the Right Direction

Finding the Right Fit

Most people work in jobs or pursue careers where their skills, abilities, interests, values, work personality, education, and professional experience are a good fit for their daily duties. To be hired, applicants for a specific position must already possess most, if not all, of the experience, skills, and education required to perform the job.

This section assignment will have you compare your self-assessment from Module 1 to the job analysis you have performed for your job of interest in this next module. This comparison aims to determine how well the skills and traits you possess match those required for your job. Next, consider your work personality, education, strengths and weaknesses, interests, abilities, and values.

Refresh your memory about the assignments completed in Module 2, as this information will play an important role in this process.

What is a Discrepancy?

In the context of this lesson, a discrepancy is the difference between the skill you possess and the skill necessary to succeed in a specific career or job. For example, if you have a typing speed of 40 words per minute and a job that you are interested in requires a speed of 130 words per minute, there is a discrepancy between your typing speed and the speed required by the job.

Why are Discrepancies Important?

The purpose of identifying the discrepancies between skills and those required by a job of interest is to help make an informed decision.

Analyzing Discrepancies

Analyzing discrepancies will help you answer important questions.

- Is it possible to perform a chosen job of interest given current skills?
- Do you meet the minimum skill levels required or need more training before applying?
- Are there aspects of the job that make it less appealing to you now that you know more about it?
- Does the job take advantage of strengths and interests?
- Are you overqualified for the position?

The intent of discrepancy analysis is to enable oneself to objectively examine what might need to be worked on to make a given job or career a good fit for you. To be a successful job seeker, you must compare your skills and aptitudes to those required by every job you consider.

Employers use discrepancy analysis when looking for employees. Many typically create a checklist of required skills and aptitudes based on the job requirements and will evaluate every applicant against this criterion.

Employers have basic criteria that determine whether they disregard an application right away. For example:

- Education

- Years of experience
- Familiarity with specific software
- Mastery of a specific type of machinery
- Languages spoken

An employer may have specific crucial skills they seek in an employee. These skills may be a critical part to being a success in a given job, and it may not be reasonable for the employer to consider applicants who do not meet those criteria.

It is for this reason we suggest practicing discrepancy analysis and utilizing the information you have collected in prior lessons.

A good way to get practice beyond that offered by your own job analysis is to take job listings from job websites. Review each job listing down into the needed skills. Then, compare this list to your self-analysis. You might find a great fit that you had not thought of before!

Next Steps: Review a Sample Discrepancy Analysis and then complete the assignment.

6-2 Sample Discrepancy Analysis

Laura's Discrepancy Analysis

Job: Paralegal

Analysis: Overall, I think I am pretty well prepared for this job, and the tasks and nature of the work seem like a good fit for my skills and traits.

I have discrepancies in the following areas: Legal database experience: I do not have any experience with Lexis/Nexus or any other of the main legal databases. I think I need to get up to speed on how to use these resources to bring that experience and confidence to my applications and interviews.

Area of specialty: I thought I could become a paralegal and then figure out what specialization I wanted. It seems to me now that I should probably figure out what sort of law interests me most and then direct my search based on that. That way, my paralegal work can inform my ultimate goal of becoming a lawyer. This will require some research on my part before moving ahead with finding a job.

Paper filing systems: I am a little concerned about managing complex paper filing systems that have not been made accessible for people with blindness or low vision. Paralegals have to deal with a lot of paper really quickly, so I do not want this to be an issue for a potential employer. I would like to have a solution ready if it comes up.

Education/Experience: I will be finishing up my B.A. this year, so I think I am prepared, though I wish I had thought to try to get some paralegal experience last summer. I wonder if there is a way for me to start part-time somewhere during my last year.

Typing: while no one has overtly said there is a requirement for typing speed, so much communication happens via email in a law office that I think it might be a good idea for me to get my typing speed up so that I can save some time during the day. I do not think it will make much difference when applying for a job, but it might when it comes to keeping the job I finally land.

6-3 Assignment: Discrepancy Analysis

Go back to your Self-Analysis Report and review your interests, skills/abilities, values, and work personality code. Take a moment to review your Job Information Form, which now should be quite flushed out and full of the relevant information you have researched through job descriptions and websites, your informational interview, and job observation. Write a detailed discrepancy analysis, accounting for the areas you believe you are prepared for and the areas that need to be worked on to be a viable candidate for a given job.

The goal of the assignment is to identify the places in which work is necessary. This will facilitate the ability to work on any skills for the career and make it a good fit.

Module 7: The Vocational Action Plan Assignment

7-1 Lesson: Putting Research to Work

In this course, you identified a job, researched its description, and conducted informational interviews and job observations. In your discrepancy analysis, you compared the requirements of that position to your skills, abilities, and dislikes. Hopefully, the job you have analyzed has proven to be a good fit for you. If not, you should move to a new job and start the analysis process again until you find the right position.

Once you have found the job you want to pursue, the next step is to create a vocational action plan.

Creating a vocational action plan is a big step toward achieving your ultimate employment goal. The action plan will help you maintain self-awareness, be realistic about goal setting, and break down your required progress into achievable steps.

Next Steps: Review a Sample Vocational Action Plan and complete the assignment. ***

7-2 Sample Vocational Action Plan

Barbara's Vocational Action Plan

Job: Paralegal Plan

Discrepancy: Legal Database Experience

Action: See if I can access Lexis/Nexus through my university or branch library. See if there are librarians at these locations who could help me practice using these databases. Spend two hours per week working on Lexis/Nexus searches and gaining familiarity with how the database works. Talk to Karen, Simon, and Lindsey to see if there are any other common legal databases or other online resources I should familiarize myself with to make me a stronger candidate

Discrepancy: I have not figured out what kind of law I am interested in.

Action: Talk to Karen about how she went about choosing her specialty. Before I call her, I will research types of law and see if I can narrow the field down a bit. I know I do not want to go the corporate route or be a bankruptcy lawyer.

Discrepancy: I do not have any work experience in the field.

Action: I will go to the Career Center to see if they have any leads on a part-time paralegal or related work. Hopefully, I can get some kind of real-world experience before I graduate.

Concerns:

Typing: I want to get my typing speed up a bit. I will ask the vocational rehabilitation center if they have any courses I can take to improve.

Paper filing systems: I want to talk to Lindsey about how realistic it is for a law firm to make their paper filing systems accessible to me. She seems to manage fine, but Karen's firm is really flexible and invested in making things accessible. If I am going to be at a larger firm, I need to know how it might work to come up with solutions.

7-3 Assignment: Vocational Action Plan

List the job that you are most interested in getting. This is your ultimate vocational goal. Based on your discrepancy analysis, think about the steps that will be necessary to reach that goal. Use the information from the discrepancy analysis to identify the requirements that you do not meet. Consider what is necessary to meet them. Is it improving an existing skill? Learning a new one? Getting certification? Finishing a degree? Now put together a step-by-step plan that can be implemented in order to meet your goal.

CONGRATULATIONS! You have reached the end of Course 2: Career Exploration – Resources and Methods. Please be sure to save the assignments you have completed.

Please continue on to...

Course 3: Finding Employment

COURSE 3: Finding Employment

[Introduction to the Job Seeker's Toolkit](#)

The Job Seeker's Toolkit aims to help you acquire essential skills necessary for successful employment. The skills and topics reviewed will help you move towards a successful job search and beyond. The Job Seeker's Toolkit, through a series of five courses, will help in building your own toolkit to assist you in preparing for the world of work.

The five courses are structured into modules and activities that build on the content and exercises of the preceding material. For this reason, we recommend working your way through the courses in chronological order and completing each assignment along the way. However, if you have an interview tomorrow, feel free to skip ahead for tips!

The effort you put into building your own Toolkit will provide you with a foundation fundamental for success in the world of work.

The Job Seeker's Toolkit is built to accompany you through the job search and the employment lifecycle, from building self-awareness to determining the best-fit career path, identifying employment opportunities, preparing for an interview, all the way to maintaining employment and advancing your career.

Course 3: Finding Employment delves into tasks and considerations while applying for jobs. Considerations and tasks necessary for applying for jobs include:

Disclosure of Disability

Company Culture

Disability Statement

Personal Data Document

Building a Resume

Course 3: Finding Employment

Module 1: Disclosure of Disability

1-1 Lesson: Disclosure of Disability

Deciding when to disclose a disability to a potential or current employer is a personal choice, and there is no specific time when someone should disclose their disability. In fact, disclosing one's disability is a frequently debated issue. If you asked three people with disabilities about disclosure during the employment process, you will likely hear three different viewpoints.

Ultimately, the potential or active employee decides what and when to disclose. When you choose to disclose is a protected right under the Americans with Disabilities Act. An employer cannot treat an employee's decision to disclose a disability as a form of dishonesty, regardless of the timing of the disclosure.

Considering the Company Culture

Prior to even applying for a job, it is important to research the company culture. Does the company share the same values as you have? How are employees treated? What are employees saying? What is the company's culture regarding hiring, retaining, and promoting employees with disabilities?

- Check the About section of the company website: What does it show about their values, employee history, and recognition?
- Peruse their social media: What awards, events, and company happenings do they share on social media?
- Evaluate business and industry publications: What are trade publications sharing about the company?
- What are employees saying about working at the company? Check sources like GlassDoor and local business groups. See what their employees are writing about working for the company. **Remember that former or current employees may have written their comments in moments of anger or excitement.** Someone may have recently lost their job, while someone else may have received a bonus check for being with the company for 5 or 20 years. Compare the information you gather. Are there trends in what you have seen? Maybe you find that they sensationalize the skills of employees. Is this something that you are comfortable with?
- Prior to submitting a resume or cover letter or having an interview, it is a good idea to research the culture of a potential employer as it relates to being an employee with a disability.

The Process of Disclosing a Disability

It is suggested that disclosing a disability should be viewed as an interactive process between an employee and their employer. Often, it is thought that a potential employer cannot ask about a person's disability. However, if a disability is apparent, an employer can ask about the ability to perform the essential job tasks.

As an example:

Mary has a job interview and receives a copy of the company's code of conduct and attendance policies. She was asked to read the document and told they would answer any questions.

Mary is not able to see the small print on the documents. So, she uses her smartphone to enlarge the text. In the interest of time, she also scanned the documents and used the phone's speech to read it to her using her earbuds.

At this point, it would be acceptable for the interviewer to ask Mary about her ability to handle tasks associated with the job she is applying for. Mary's demonstration of using her phone to read information shows that she is competent in solving the issue of not seeing the text given to her visually.

Disclosure Timing

Ultimately, the decision to disclose or not is yours. It's important to remember that you are not covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) until you disclose your disability to an employer.

There is not one right answer to the disclosure issue; each situation and employer is different. Use the list of scenarios of disclosure options and the vignette to think about your situation.

Disclosure Scenarios: Pros and Cons

Below are various stages in the employment process when disclosure may occur. Some possible reactions and consequences are listed. Consider pros and cons for each situation. Also, remember that disclosure may happen naturally, as illustrated in the above example of Mary using her phone to read material.

Disclosure prior to the interview by email or phone call

Possible Positives:

The employer knows upfront and will not be caught off guard when a person who is blind or low vision appears in their office.

The employer feels that you are being honest. The employer will have time to consider how a person with this type of disability would fulfill the job duties.

The employer may interpret early disclosure as being comfortable with oneself. This can be viewed as a positive quality, and the employer may perceive that you can do the job without questions asked!

Some employers are required to hire employees who have disabilities. Additionally, some employers must document how many of their employees have disabilities.

Possible Negatives:

The employer may be scared or intimidated and decide to ignore the resume or application due to preconceived misconceptions or perceptions about people who are blind or low vision.

The employer may have never met a person who is blind or has low vision and thus be unsure or uncomfortable about interviewing someone who is blind or has low vision.

The employer may not intend to hire someone who has a disability but will interview the candidate since they are concerned with being accused of discrimination.

The employer may think they will not be able to afford the accommodations required to hire an employee with a disability and, therefore, may not consider interviewing a person who is blind or low vision.

Disclosure prior to an interview

By meeting the employer in person (going into the employer's office or place of business to retrieve or drop off an application), you may disclose that you have a disability.

Possible Positives:

Going in person demonstrates the ability to arrive at the employer's office and act professionally.

By entering confidently and being dressed appropriately, you can make a good impression, and your disability may not be an issue.

This is an opportunity to sell yourself as a potentially valuable and capable employee. In-person interaction may dispel any biases or misconceptions about your abilities.

An in-person meeting is a good opportunity to educate a potential employer and promote skills and assets as a quality applicant for a given job.

By disclosing at this stage, the employer can ask about possible accommodations necessary to fulfill the job duties or take an entrance test. Again, this is an opportunity to ease their worries by explaining what accommodations you need for the job.

You can demonstrate a piece of technology that may assist with performing the job duties. Demonstrating how you will accomplish a task may alleviate any doubts an employer may have about handling functions on the job.

Possible Negatives:

If the employer has a bias or holds prejudice against persons with disabilities, they might block you from getting an interview. Even if supporting documentation shows otherwise.

The employer or staff may assume a person who is blind or low vision is not able to perform a job just because someone is disabled. They also may have a preconceived notion that hiring a person who is blind or low vision means other employees would have to perform some or most of the job responsibilities.

[Disclosure during the interview, in person or on the phone](#)

Possible Positives:

Open-minded employers will be interested in how your abilities fit the job duties.

Some employers may be comfortable hiring persons with disabilities but still have concerns. By disclosing at the interview stage, you can address their concerns and demonstrate that you are a competent, qualified candidate who would be a superb addition to their company.

It is not uncommon to have to educate an employer about blindness or low vision. If you can inform a potential employer during the interview, take the time to do so.

Discuss the reality of your disability. It is important to talk about your situation simply, honestly, and comfortably without making the interviewer feel dumb or awkward.

Remember: employers are not supposed to ask about disabilities; if you choose to disclose, they will want relevant information. It is better to proactively and comprehensively address their concerns.

Some employers may have other quality employees with disabilities and will be excited to see how you could do the job effectively.

Waiting to disclose until the interview means that a possible biased employer doesn't have the opportunity to block you from interviewing. You have a better chance of being judged fairly and also have the opportunity to sell skills and positive attributes during the interview process.

Possible Negatives:

The employer might feel that waiting to disclose until the interview is a dishonest way to represent yourself. Remember, the ADA does not require disclosure at a certain point. It is up to the applicant.

Disclosure right after you are hired and when already on the job

Possible Positives:

Hiring has occurred without having to negotiate biases or risk getting excluded from consideration because of a disability.

Possible Negatives:

Your employer feels they have been forced into something without complete knowledge of the consequences.

Your employer may interpret your delay in disclosure as a lack of self-confidence.

Disclosure only when it becomes an issue on the job

Possible Positives:

Hiring took place without having to negotiate biases or run the risk of getting excluded from consideration based on having a disability.

Able to demonstrate your worth on the job.

Possible Negatives:

You have to hide something that is a part of who you are.

Your employer may notice that you struggle with some tasks and begin to think that you have a cognitive issue.

Employers may be dissatisfied with work performance and quality. The employer may begin documenting these issues. You may eventually disclose your disability to your boss, but at that point, the decision to terminate employment may have already been made.

Since the employer was not aware of your disability when they decided to terminate employment, protection under civil rights and human rights laws may not be available to you as a person with a disability.

Disclosure late in the game: the employer may feel that excuses are being made for poor work performance issues.

1-2 Sample Disclosure

Vignette: Joe's Disclosure

I will be an asset to your company because I bring a good work ethic, reliability, loyalty, collaboration, and high standards to every job I do. I'm an excellent team player and have always been able to accomplish work tasks on my own. I am a good problem solver.

My right field of vision is excellent, but I have lost my left field of vision. This means I have fully functional but partial sight in both eyes. I have learned to scan my environment to obtain information about what is happening around me. I can read, type, and interpret visual information with no problem. I get around easily using buses, trains, and subways. I took a bus and a train here today.

1-3 Assignment: Disclosure

In this section, we discussed several disclosure scenarios. Using the scenarios, list the pros and cons as they directly

pertain to yourself.

What is your reaction to each of these scenarios and their consequences? Why? What are the pros and cons specifically pertaining to your situation?

- Disclosure prior to the interview, by correspondence (cover letter or resume features) or phone call
- Prior to an interview, meeting the employer in person (going into the employer's office or place of business to get or drop off an application or obtain paperwork)
- During the interview, in person or on the phone
- Disclosure right after you are hired and when already on the job
- Disclosure only when it becomes an issue on the job

Next steps: Further explore the topic of disclosing a disability by reading the APH CareerConnect blog and watching the embedded Employment Connections video: [Introducing "Employment Connections." First Topic: Disclosing a Disability.](#)

2-1 Lesson: Preparing for Discussing a Disability with a Potential Employer

At some point in the employment process, it may become necessary to describe your disability and how it affects your life and work. Doing so will allow you to be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other civil and human rights laws.

Disclosing is an opportunity to make your potential employer more comfortable and informed about your needs as an employee with a disability.

Speak about any accommodation needs you may have honestly and non-threateningly.

As a person with a disability, it's important to describe what your disability is and how it impacts you concerning employment. Do not use too many technical terms, and keep your explanation practical. Be clear about what you can see and explain how you accommodate limitations. Mentioning how you access computers or other information is usually a good idea.

Putting together a disability statement prepares you for the time in the job process when you must emphasize your skills and potential and put an employer's concerns to rest. Using plain language to describe the ability to accomplish job duties or meet general goals is important.

Speaking about blindness or low vision in terms of how you perform job duties by describing how you have performed similar jobs in the past can be helpful. Relating accommodations to specific job duties will enable the employer to understand what you need for different job tasks and why a specific accommodation may work in one setting but not another. Consider what the employer wants or needs to know to understand accommodation requests related to different jobs.

Disclosure during the employment process is not an appropriate time to lecture someone about having a disability. Instead, your disability statement is an opportunity to promote yourself and help a potential employer recognize how you will be a valuable team member.

Tips:

When describing your disability or disabilities, use positive language, simple terms and phrasing, and include

functional implications. Here are some examples:

"I have an eye condition that limits what I can see. It's like looking through a straw. I have to scan or look around more because of this loss of peripheral vision. I can look at you and see your face, but I do not see the rest of you or the surroundings."

"I use screen reading software. The software verbally speaks to me what is on my computer screen. I use a split headset to allow me to listen to the computer in one ear while speaking and listening to the phone in the other ear. If not on the phone, I can use that ear to listen to other information in my surroundings."

"Because of my visual impairment, I am unable to drive, so I use the bus system to get around. I took the bus here today. If the bus is not working, I have other transportation methods."

"I use a device that enlarges paper documents to allow me to see them easily. Other documents can be given to me electronically, or I can scan them into my computer."

"As you can see, I have great technology skills, and I am very creative and will be able to meet the duties assigned to me."

"I use a braille display connected to my phone or laptop. The braille display allows me to see what is on the screen. I can quickly edit documents, modify my schedule, enter client information, and proofread what I have typed for accuracy. I have been typing on a qwerty keyboard since second grade."

<CALL-OUT Box in SIDE BAR>

When describing your disabilities, use positive language, simple terms and phrasing, and include functional implications.

Example: "I use a video magnifier to enlarge written material. This allows me to change the contrast of text on paper so I can read more easily."

<END CALL-OUT Box in SIDE BAR>

2-2 Sample Disability Statement

Andrew's Disability Statement

I am visually impaired, and I have an eye condition called RP or Retinitis Pigmentosa. This eye condition has deteriorated my retina from the outside to the inside. I see through a small "tunnel" of vision in each eye. The vision I have in the center is good, usable vision. I can read with magnification on my computer by utilizing special software. I also use electronic speech through a screen reading feature in the software. I use a split headset to listen to the computer and handle phone calls.

I use a video magnification system that sits on my desk. It magnifies print materials into larger print with good contrast for me to see. I also carry a small handheld magnifier in my pocket, just in case. I have great computer skills that will allow me to be an asset to your business. I can read braille as well, but I typically read print. I can demonstrate some of the technology I use so that you get a better idea, or I can direct you to a few websites showing videos of it in use.

I know that as a human resources representative, I will be organizing many documents. I tend to scan them into my computer and save them in a file system. I always back up my information and feel electronic copies are the easiest. I can organize print as well. I label folders with braille labels I will provide. The labels are similar to a piece of tape with some bumps. I can show you an example.

Human resources personnel travel occasionally, and I know that will not be difficult for me. I pride myself on being punctual and reliable. I use public transportation to travel and have no issues getting around. If a bus is delayed, I will use Uber or Lyft or find another method of transportation. I have built up an excellent transportation network. My vision is much better during the day than at night or in dark rooms. I use a white cane to help me travel efficiently through environments. I am very confident in my skills and would be a great addition to your business. If you have any questions, please ask, and I can answer them.

2-3 Assignment: Your Disability Statement

Write your disability statement. Think about which of these areas you need to address:

- Travel to and from work (reliability)
- Completion of routine tasks
- Reading of printed material
- Verification of client's signatures or identification documents
- Technology (can offer possible demonstration or website to view a demonstration)
- Questions may come up regarding the security of assistive technology
- Independence (complete tasks on your own)

Use these points to create your disability statement, memorize it, and then practice reciting it to a friend, family member, counselor, or teacher. Get started!

Module 3: Creating a Personal Data Document

3-1 Lesson: Developing a Personal Data Document of Basic Information Supporting the Job Application

Most employers require the same basic preliminary information from every applicant. It's important to have accurate information readily available and organized when applying for a job.

A good way to prepare is to develop a Personal Data Document.

While employers may ask for a different order or use different words to describe this information, they will almost certainly require data from the following seven categories:

Personal Information: The category includes your full name, current address, past addresses, current phone number(s), email address, date of birth, place of birth, citizenship information, and parents' or guardians' names.

Education and Training: List the high school and college you attend or attended with the most recent first. Include the school's name, address, and phone number and the years of your attendance at each. If you have graduated, include your graduation year and specify if you earned a diploma or degree. Include your GPA (unless it's below average) and any honors you received at each school.

Employment History: In this section, you should list the locations of previous employers, starting with the most recent. For each position, include the following: name of the business, address, phone number, your position and duties, your salary at hire (per hour, per month, or per year), salary at the end of employment, the dates of employment, your supervisor's name and phone number, and the reason you left the job.

Keep in mind, employment history can tell an employer a few things about you. If you are a recent graduate, it's understandable you may not have a long work history. If you have been out of school for a while and don't have a current work history, this may prompt some questions from a potential employer.

If your work history has many different businesses listed, but you only spent a short period at each, a potential employer may wonder about your loyalty or the quality of your work. Because filling a position and training a new employee requires an investment of an employer's time and effort, employers want to make sure that whomever they hire will stay in the position long enough to see a return on that investment.

In the employment history section of your Personal Data Document, on any application, and during any interview, it's important to carefully phrase your reason for leaving each job. You should never lie, but you should think about how you can phrase things so that you are seen in the best light possible.

Never speak negatively about past employers, as the business world can be a small network, and information can be spread through friends and "friends of friends." You could easily and quickly damage your reputation in your local community, making it even harder to get hired. As you develop your document, consider your work history from the employer's perspective and prepare answers for possible questions.

Community Service/Volunteer Work: Use this category to list any internships, community service, or volunteer work you have done. Include the name of the organization, the address, phone number, the contact person (for verification of your hours), the number of hours you donated, the dates you volunteered, and the duties and skills you acquired or learned as a result of your donation of time.

Awards: Keep a detailed log of the awards you receive in high school and/or college. Awards demonstrate examples of your value to an employer. Do not describe an award using abbreviations or jargon which may be

unfamiliar to an employer.

Special Skills/Additional Certifications: List any particular skills that may make you more valuable or qualified. If you were captain of the golf team for two years, you may want to list your leadership skills as an example.

Additional examples of information you may want to include are your knowledge of foreign languages, computer programming languages, special certifications, or additional training. Remember that if you state you are proficient in using a software program, you are stating you are an expert and should be prepared to demonstrate your skill level to a potential employer if asked.

References: Include the name, job title, address, and preferred contact information of at least three people you have worked with or known well who can vouch for your work ethic and potential to be a valuable employee. Include your relationship to each of your references (supervisor, college professor, etc.) and the duration you have known your reference.

Your references should be reputable and be able to express why you would be a good candidate for a job. Your references should be those with whom or for whom you have worked, volunteered, or interned. If you don't have an employment history yet, teachers or professors you have worked with often can also be good references. Avoid providing family members or friends as references.

Before including someone on this list, ask them if they would be willing to be an employment reference for you. If they are, ask for a written letter of recommendation (some employers will ask for such letters), preferably on business letterhead. Also, ask them for their preferred method of contact and make sure that method is what you include in your Personal Data Document.

The Personal Data Document is intended to facilitate the completion of job applications. Having information organized in a single place will allow one to complete online quickly, paper job applications efficiently, and meet important deadlines. This information will also help you build your resume, as you will need to include some of the same data on your resume. Be sure to check the spelling of businesses, schools, names of certifications, towns, and other information that could pose challenges.

3-2 Assignment: Personal Data Document

Open a blank document and create your Personal Data Document. If you have already created a Personal Data Document, review and update it using the tips provided to you in this lesson.

Module 4: Building a Resume

4-1 Lesson: Developing a Crucial Job Search Tool: the Resume

Resumes are a necessary tool in the job and internship-seeking process. A resume is essential if you are in high school with no work experience, a college graduate, or reentering the world of work. A resume should be high quality; formatting should be consistent and current. Having a generic resume ready to go is always a good idea. You can tailor your resume based on a job description associated with a job posting.

You can use a resume to showcase your skills, abilities, and accomplishments. It's an advertisement of who you are and should convince an employer you would be an asset to the place of employment as an employee or intern.

Often, you can upload your resume while applying for jobs online. Follow instructions regarding specific file types, page length, or other information listed. You may also be required to enter the information from a resume into a web form, allowing the employer's database to aggregate data in a predetermined format.

Many employers will formally require the submission of a resume at some point in the application process. Even when it's not officially needed, most businesses will be pleased to accept a resume accompanied by your job application when applying for a job or internship. The resume and your application are an opportunity to highlight your skills and assets compared to other applicants.

It's normal to feel a bit intimidated by the resume development process. If you have thoughtfully completed the assignments in this course, you have already done much of the legwork required to create a solid resume.

What Does a Resume Include?

Resumes typically have similar categories to those in the Personal Data Document, such as personal information, educational background, and work history. Resumes may also include sections for awards, certifications, honors, special skills, and references. Unlike the listing in your Personal Data Document, the work history section will typically include an additional description of each job to provide a potential employer with a summary of the kinds of work accomplished.

Important note: Never include your social security number, work authorization number, date of birth, or address on your resume. Including this information puts you at risk for identity theft. Online and paper job applications may ask for some or all of the information listed above. It is never a good idea to provide your date of birth or Social Security Number online if you do not need to.

General Format

It's important to consider resume formatting. Make sure you use consistent formatting that is easy to read. You want your resume to visually appeal to an employer with several resumes to review.

The font, spacing, and overall appearance of your resume are important to consider. Your resume should use typographic emphasis such as bold, underline, and italic so the employer can quickly locate specific information about you. For instance, the headings on your resume should be typed in all caps to delineate new categories of information. In addition, bullets are often used in resumes to list important facts.

The following are key headings and the types of relevant information you need to include on your resume:

Personal Information or Resume Heading

This information is entered at the top of your resume and includes your full name, phone number, and email address. Because this identifies you to the employer, this information is typically a font size larger than the other text in your resume and is often centered on the page.

The goal is for your name to stand out to the employer. Keep in mind your email address should be formal and standard, such as your first initial and last name or your first name and last name. If necessary, create a new email address and use it to apply for jobs.

It might seem like a small detail, but it's important to always present yourself professionally in a job search. Employers will not hesitate to dismiss a resume with an inappropriate email address.

Objective

The objective is a statement addressing what you are trying to accomplish or what you hope to get from the job. This should change based on the job that you are applying for. Be sure to update this section of your resume when you apply for different positions. Your objective should be clear and to the point, such as "To gain part-time employment as a stocking clerk." "To gain full-time employment as a medical biller."

Summary of Qualifications

Your qualifications are skills and attributes you possess that can come from your experiences in school, volunteering, extra-curricular activities, training, etc. An example of a qualification you might list is "Excellent written and verbal communication skills." List 3-4 qualifications necessary for the job you are applying for.

Education

List the most recent and subsequent places you have studied and the dates you attended, and specify what you were awarded, such as a diploma, master's degree, etc. If you have a college degree or a certification from a trade school, there is no need to list your high school information.

Work Experience

Provide your current or most recent place of employment first, followed by additional places of employment in continued chronological order. Include the dates of your employment and key duties you performed as a bulleted point. Always provide the same pieces of information for every job you list.

Community Service/Volunteer Work

Community service and volunteer work are great things to add to your resume, especially if you lack paid experience. Listing volunteer experience on a resume indicates to an employer that you take initiative, are self-motivated, are willing to try new things and support your community.

Honors and Distinctions

List awards, certificates, and other credentials. Do not use abbreviations or terminology a hiring manager may not understand. "Volunteer Ski Instructor, Ski for Light 2015 to present."

- Taught youth who are blind and low vision basic ski techniques
- Assisted with the training of ski sighted guides

- Provided support while out on group activities.

This section can help you stand out and give you an edge over others applying for the same job.

Activities

If used correctly, the information in this section of your resume can help set you apart. Your activities can be professionally relevant as they demonstrate your leadership and teamwork potential. Some activities are not appropriate or relevant to list on a resume, such as reading or watching movies.

Additional Skills

This is an area to stress skills you have not highlighted on another part of your resume.

References

Don't include references on your resume; however, your reference list should be available upon request. Keep your references as professional as possible. In other words, listing your neighbor or your sister would not be appropriate. Instead, list past supervisors, teachers, coaches, clients you have babysat for, etc. You want to list people who can attest to your reliability, work ethic, and character. Be sure you contact your references for their permission to list them if an employer requests references in the application process.

Length

For most job seekers in the early stages of their careers, a one-page resume will be the standard length required and preferred by employers. Employers often have dozens or even hundreds of resumes to review for a single job. They will not have time to read through a long resume to ensure they have caught all the important points.

One of the most critical parts of resume development is ensuring that you have made it easy for the potential employer to see everything about you quickly. You might find that the first draft of your resume is longer than a single page. In that case, make sure your writing is as clear and to the point as possible. Then, look at your font size, margins, and other formatting options and make adjustments so your full resume fits completely and legibly on one sheet.

As your career progresses and your work history grows, longer resumes will be acceptable and expected.

Accuracy

Never lie on your resume. Businesses regularly perform fact-checking on applicants before hiring. If it appears you have misrepresented your accomplishments or the facts of your past employment, your application will be dismissed and your reputation will suffer. If you are hired, and it is later discovered that you lied or misrepresented yourself on your resume or application, your employment may be terminated.

<SIDEBAR: KEY TAKE_AWAY!>

ALWAYS BE ACCURATE AND CUSTOMIZE A RESUME FOR EACH JOB!

< KEY TAKE AWAY!>

Customization

Once you have developed a solid master resume, you can tailor it to fit different jobs. Look at the job description listed in the job posting and see what key terminology is being used. Try changing the resume's wording to reflect the tasks in the job posting.

Adjust and edit your work history based on the position you are applying for.

Provide the most detail for the jobs and job tasks that are most relevant and downplay positions that are not relevant. If you have gaps in your employment history, make sure you have thought about how to explain them.

Order the resume headings to highlight your best qualifications for the position. If you have strong educational experience for a specific job but not as much relevant work experience, list your educational experience above your work experience.

Analyze your resume and decide what category most applies to the specific job you are applying for.

Additional Tips on Writing

Remember to keep writing short and to the point.

For past jobs, use the past tense: "Trained superiors on how to use the fryer; participated in a training; certified by the United Health Services; trained under an experienced chef; provided customer services; processed user applications."

For your present job, use the present tense: "Train coworkers on inventory practices; responsible for copier maintenance and supply; work with experienced chef; supervise three interns."

Get Feedback from Others

A resume should be printed on standard 8.5 by 11-inch white paper. Have a trusted person review each resume for content and formatting before submitting it. Editing is important for any person developing a resume, as it is a difficult document to perfect.

Keep It Current

An up-to-date resume is important. One never knows when a job opportunity will come calling. It's important to make sure your contact information is accurate and appropriate.

Michael Smith

330-993-9877
smithm@gmail.com

OBJECTIVE

Reliable, mature, high school junior seeking a part-time retail sales position with a company open to employee growth.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Quick and eager learner
- Ability to work as part of a team or independently
- Responsible, efficient, and flexible
- Goal-oriented
- Polite, respectful, and courteous

EDUCATION

High School Diploma, George High School, Winterville, FL, Expected June 2024

WORK EXPERIENCE

Bagger, *Kroger Supermarket*, Long Boat Key, FL, Summer 2021 to present

- Prepare bagged groceries for customers
- Assist customers with carrying out bags of groceries
- Verify prices of items
- Greet customers and assist them with locating items

Theatre Usher, *Cinema 12*, Long Boat Key, FL, Summer 2020-2021

- Greeted, directed guests, and collected admission tickets
- Counted and recorded number of tickets collected
- Answered questions from guests
- Paged individuals needed at the box office

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Contributed 40 volunteer hours to *Sal's Thrift Store*, Summer 2019
- Volunteered 50 hours to *Suncoast Animal Shelter*, Summer 2020
- Volunteered 35 hours to the *Vet's Soup Kitchen*, Fall 2020

HONORS and DISTINCTIONS

- National Honor Society Member, 2020- Current
- Earned George High School Perfect Attendance Award, 2021 and 2022
- Achieved Honor Roll, George High School, 2021, 2022, and 2023
- Most Valuable Goal Ball Youth Player, Goal Ball Association, 2021
- First Place Science Fair, George High School, 2021

ACTIVITIES

- Drama Club, 2021 and 2022
- Lake County Library History Book Club, 2020-2022
- Yearbook Committee, 2023-2024

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

- Skilled in using Windows and iOS devices
- Proficient in software platforms associated with Windows and IOS-based systems
- 60 words-per-minute typist
- Fluent in Spanish
- Certified in First Aid and CPR

REFERENCES

Furnished upon request.

Sample Reference Contact Information

The following is a sample of references for jobs done by Michael Smith. When gathering contact information for references, use this as a guide. Typically, references will not be requested until the job application process or in-person interview. But it is always best to be prepared.

Sample References

Bob Parks

Kroger Supermarket Customer Service Manager 445 Winding Boulevard
Long Boat Key, FL 33445 parksb@gmail.com
330-993-2663

Mary Brown

Suncoast Animal Shelter Volunteer Coordinator 2234 North Shore Drive
Long Boat Key, FL 33446
brownm@sasvc.org 330-993-5566

Sheila Conway

National Honor Society Coordinator George High School
446 St. Marks Trail
Long Boat Key, FL 33446 conways@ghs.net
330-993-8765

4-3 Assignment: Build Your Own Resume

Use the information and tips you learned to create a resume. Be sure to get feedback, edit, and revise your resume for a final, polished product.

Module 5: Finding Job Leads

5-1 Lesson: Exploring Several Methods for Finding Job Leads

The job search can feel like searching for gold by sifting through wet mud! It can take considerable time and effort, often for seemingly little reward. Along the way, however, you may find rocks that seem worthless but are very valuable. Job leads can come in many forms, including information about job openings through ads, postings, information from your network, or even rumors or news stories. Job leads are a crucial part of the job-seeking process. No job lead is bad; some just may not pan out. Being diligent, patient, and prepared throughout the process is important.

The methods that most people use to find jobs are typically broken up into three categories:

1. Networking
2. Cold calls
3. Intermediary

Networking is typically used by persons who have more experience, while cold calling is commonly associated with positions that are lower paying and possibly paid an hourly wage. Intermediary is the method most commonly associated with conducting a job search. Intermediary includes searching online employment websites.

Below are several ways to explore or create job leads.

Personal Network

Most job seekers find jobs via contacts and personal networking. In course 1, a Network Pyramid was developed. Now is the time to reach out to your network.

Using your Personal Network Pyramid, think about who the best people to reach out to are. What people may have connections to help you locate employment?

Be tactful and professional and make contact through phone, in person, or via email.

Keep good records of whom you contact and the information each contact provides. If you tell someone you will follow up with them later, make sure you do so.

Social Networking

A very effective way to network is through social media. Social networking is similar to contacting your network by phone, but you can do more to show off your skills and abilities. Learn more about using LinkedIn on the APH CareerConnect and NSITE Connect websites.

The Importance of Thanking Your Network

Show appreciation to all who have provided potential job leads. Even if the lead did not bear fruit, take the time to thank everyone who offers a lead, advice, or even a listening ear. This is important etiquette. It will also enable you to keep your network ready and willing to help whenever they hear of something related to a relevant career.

A small token of appreciation to your network member is a good idea when you obtain a job due to the information they provide.

Remember: It's important to plan your research and develop your job leads, particularly if you are

looking for a job in a tight or highly competitive job market.

Professional Organizations and Associations

Many fields have professional organizations you can join to access job postings and employment information specific to that field or industry. Companies may pay these professional organizations to post jobs on their websites. Professional organizations can have a national presence and local affiliates or chapters in each state or even certain cities.

These organizations also may have an email list specific to professionals working in the field. Often, organizations and companies will send announcements of job openings to these lists because they know that the recipients are interested in the field.

Job Centers or Career Centers are also good sources for job leads.

Find out where you can post your resume to be viewed by employers. Ensure you know the etiquette for each specific place where you post your resume. Be careful giving out personal information, and always remember to give a method to respond to your inquiry.

Conferences, Workshops, and Meetings

You might find announcements for conferences, meetings, workshops, or networking events through your research. These gatherings are great places to network, find job leads, and learn more about the current state of the field you are interested in. Be prepared, creative, professional, and outgoing when attending these events. Dress professionally and attend with a game plan to network. Have several copies of your resume and an electronic business card or something you can give to the people you meet so they will remember you.

Career Centers and Job Fairs

We covered Career Centers and job fairs earlier in this course, and they should be considered viable tools for finding job leads. Find out if you can access Career Centers and job fairs through local colleges or universities and take advantage of these resources if they are available.

Employment Centers

Employment Centers are often underutilized resources when it comes to job leads. Employment Centers offer various services that can be useful to a job seeker, such as vocational evaluation, skill training, resume review, or possible employment connections.

Employment Websites

There are many employment search websites. Some are more specialized (by industry or experience level, for example) than others. Many businesses post jobs on these sites. You can use these large sites to survey the companies you are interested in and determine how they publicize their job openings. These sites can also lead you to find other job sites used in your field of interest.

Can a Job Offer Be a Scam?

No matter where you see a job listed, it may be a scam if it sounds too good. Approach job leads or job offers that sound too good to be true with skepticism. Many "work from home" and other scams are commonly found online on all major job listing sites.

Another way to find out if something is fraudulent is to search for "scam" plus some of the information from the listing and see what you can find in the results. You also can check to see if the Department of Labor in the state where the employer is located has any complaints.

Accessing Federal Jobs

Federal agencies have two job application methods available for people with disabilities: competitive and non-competitive placements. Job applicants must meet the specified qualifications and be able to perform the essential job duties with or without reasonable accommodations.

Competitively filled jobs are advertised on [USAJOBS](#). USAJOBS is the official job posting site used by the U.S. federal government. There are approximately 16,000 jobs available on the site each day. Registering on the website allows one to apply to federal jobs. This takes some time but is worth the effort. The website allows you to select notifications of job advertisements related to keywords. USAJOBS is a tremendous resource that all people with disabilities seeking competitive employment should explore.

Jobs filled non-competitively are offered to those with disabilities and who have appropriate documentation as specified under the provisions. For more details on these processes, please visit the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#).

[The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP) website offers useful connections to resources for self-employment, youth employment, employer advisement, the latest disability policies, and more. This office advises the U.S. Department of Labor and other government agencies on employment issues regarding people with disabilities.

Libraries

As already established in earlier lessons, libraries are extremely good sources for job research and often underutilized and underappreciated sources for job leads. You can visit your local library and find out if they have any resources for an employment search, or you can use their computers for Internet access.

It may be helpful to have someone with you to help you use printed resources, but otherwise, libraries do have staff members who can assist you. If you know that you will need assistance with your search and want to learn about the resources available, scheduling an appointment with a staff member or librarian would be a good idea. Additionally, many of the search tools that you will find at the library are available online and can be accessed from home.

Create Your Leads: Cold Calling

Creating your job leads is usually done by "cold calling." Cold calling involves calling organizations where you are interested in working or that offer the type of position you are interested in holding. This method consists of calling companies without introduction or prior connection and without responding to a specific job listing. Cold calling is probably the toughest method to find a job lead because you must build a relationship quickly to convert the call into a meaningful contact.

First, you must identify companies you would like to cold call. Search online or ask friends and family for ideas. Once you have found a business you are interested in, visit their website and look for a human resources department contact and links such as "employment opportunities" or "job opportunities." More and more employers are not providing the names of Human Resources staff to prevent people from calling them directly. In some job leads, it may actually say, "No phone inquiries."

Even if an organization doesn't have job listings posted on their site, cold calling them can be worthwhile. Often, businesses have jobs that are about to become open but have not yet been posted. Some businesses may not post jobs or may not be quick about posting their opportunities. Often, businesses are willing to hold on to applications or resumes until a relevant job opens up later. This is something that you should ask a human resources or business representative when you call.

It's important to note that the employment divisions of companies can go by many names: human resources, personnel department, hiring division, etc. Smaller businesses may have a single person who handles their hiring.

When cold calling businesses, you may find that some organizations only accept applications on certain days and/or at certain times. For instance, restaurants will often reserve a slow day or a low-traffic time for applicants to meet with staff. Always respect these schedules.

Cold calling is typically more effective for lower-wage jobs. This method is not as common for higher-wage jobs.

Stay Aware

Some large and small companies hang signs in their windows to advertise they are hiring. If you want to work in a specific business or store, check the windows by the entry door for a "Help Wanted" or "Now Hiring" sign. If you lack vision, you can check in person by walking into the business and asking. Also, here is where your network can come in handy: let them know what companies you are interested in working at. Ask them to let you know if they see a help wanted sign.

Bulletin Boards

Physical bulletin boards can be great job-lead resources. Physical bulletin boards with job postings are becoming rare, but you can still find them on some school campuses, churches, libraries, and local businesses. If you are a college student, most colleges have databases or job posting web pages that list jobs on or off campus.

Job posting lists on company and organization sites can also be good places to find leads.

It's a good idea to be skeptical of jobs posted online that sound too good to be true. As with job listing sites, be aware of possible scams and research before pursuing something that sounds too good to be true.

5-2 Sample Approach to Identifying Job Leads

Stephen's Job Leads

Part 1. Methods

Personal Network

I will contact, via email, the following members of my network and ask for any information on jobs in the digital communications field, with an emphasis on website development:

- John Smith
- Kerry Hartford
- Akiko Tsuomo
- Lynn Pitchkin
- Aggie Lincoln
- Tyrone Johnson
- Professor Danforth
- Lynn Paltrow

Library

I will make an appointment with a librarian at the University to see what resources they have available for finding job leads.

Professional Organizations and Associations

I found three organizations that I would like to look into:

- Professional Association for Web Developers
- University and College Web Professionals
- Freelance Web Designer Network

I will examine the social media presence and whether they list job leads or resumes. I will find out what it takes to join as a member and gather the information.

Conferences

The University and College Web Professionals Association is having a monthly conference, and I will look into how much it costs to attend. If I can afford it, I will sign up and begin preparing for networking during the conference. I also will check with my Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to see if they can financially assist with part of the conference costs.

Cold Calling

Right now, there are three local businesses that I know I would love to work for:

- DBG Design
- University of Kentucky, Louisville, Communications and Student Recruitment
- Fork and Spoon Web Services

I will contact each and talk to them about their hiring processes. I will see if I can send them a resume now, even if they don't have any positions open. I will ask them how long they hold resumes and if I might come in to do an informational interview with someone.

Part 2: Job Leads List

Leads for Open Jobs

- Site Developer II, Fork and Spoon Web Services
- Assistant Web Developer, Chrion Associates via Akiko Tsuono
- Communications Manager, XO Communications
- Digital Asset Manager, Getty Images-Lexington via Professor Danforth
- Digital Asset Assistant, Getty Images-Lexington via Professor Danforth
- Web intern, Lexington Post

Leads for Jobs Without Openings

DBG Design has the following positions in its employment structure: Web Developer; Assistant Web Developer; Web Manager; Digital Communications Assistant; Assistant Manager; Digital Asset Management; Web Intern (college credit only).

The University of Louisville has many communications positions, and its human resources department says that the best way to learn about open positions is via its HR Website. Currently, they do not have any jobs in this area. But They update the listings on Wednesdays. I will check back each Wednesday and put a reminder that recurs in my calendar.

I have signed up for the listservs and have reviewed the job postings listed with the Professional Association for Web Developers, University and College Web Professionals, and Freelance Web Designer Network. Right now, nothing is available in my geographic area. The job postings are updated regularly.

5-3 Assignment: Finding Your Job Leads

An action plan can be useful when searching for a job or trying to accomplish any specific goal.

Part 1. Develop a Job Lead Action Plan

A Job Lead Action Plan is a list of the steps taken to develop a listing of job leads. The list is a document formatted as an outline.

First, list the methods that will be used. Then, beneath each listed method, detail the actions you plan to take. List the people, organizations, and businesses to contact, and include the method(s) you plan to use to contact each of them. Update your action plan as responses are received.

Part 2. Put Your Job Leads Action Plan to Work

Working through the action plan, create a Job Leads List with two categories. The first category will be "leads for jobs that have openings" and the second will be "leads for jobs without openings."

When you come across a job lead, list each under the appropriate category. Upon completing the action plan, order these lists based on your interest in each lead.

Module 6: Utilizing Job Leads

6-1 Lesson: Following Up on Job Leads

Take the list of job leads and place them in the order based on your interest in that job.

Pursuing job leads takes practice, tact, poise, patience, and persistence. During this process, it can feel like traveling through a maze. It is important to explore many paths until you find the one that leads you to the other side. It might take some time, but remember: the right path could be the start of a career!

Preparation

Preparation is the key to success. Start by doing research regarding each job lead. The idea is to have as much information as possible before contacting the employer. This will assist in making a good first impression.

Take good notes and keep them organized. Remember to update the resource log created earlier. All of this information can be useful if you get an interview.

If you receive a lead through a contact, gather as much information from the contact as possible while still

being polite. Remember to thank the person for the contact(s) provided!

Research the business for which you have a lead.

Explore the business' website.

Find out about the products or services they offer.

Perform a general search for the business on the Web and social media. This is a way to obtain a variety of information on a company.

Find any current news articles that mention the business and read them. It is important to be current with the business's current issues.

Find out the business's major competitors and a few basics about them.

Check industry information to see any current trends or major happenings in the field or market in which the business operates.

Contact

It is time to contact the business. Practice what you will say by role-playing with a partner, friend, family member, or counselor. Ask them for feedback after completing the role-play.

Contact the business and follow up on the job lead. Always note the people you meet at an organization via phone, email, or in person (this skill can translate to many parts of life.) Write thank you notes to anyone with whom you connect. Be sure to thank them for their time and for answering your questions.

Be polite when speaking. Proper manners go a long way when trying to create new opportunities. Be persistent when pursuing a job lead but not overly aggressive. You want them to know you are eager to work for them, but you don't want them to feel harassed.

Sample Questions to ask:

- Who is their human resources/personnel contact? Some companies do not provide this information publicly.
- How or where can job postings be located?
- How often are job postings updated?
- What is their application process?
- Do they require any pre or post-interview testing? If so, could they describe the testing?
- Do they keep applications on file for future jobs that would be a match??
- How long are applications kept on file?

Most people, no matter their level of experience, are a little nervous when contacting potential employers. Following up on job leads can be an intimidating process. Building confidence will develop over time.

6-2 Sample Approach for Job Lead Follow-Through

Josie's Job Lead Follow-Through

The lead I am following is a position I heard about from Professor Danforth: Digital Asset Assistant at Getty Images-Lexington.

I will be calling Marion Fishman, a colleague of Professor Danforth's, and saying the following:

Hello, Ms. Fishman; my name is Josie Armentrout. Professor Cosmo Danforth gave me your contact information because he thought I would be a good fit for the Digital Asset Assistant position. I was hoping that we could talk for a moment about the position. Is now a good time?

(If not, ask for a better time and schedule a call.)

Thanks very much for your time. I really appreciate it. I am excited to apply for the position of Digital Asset Assistant. I have a resume I would like to submit for consideration.

Can I submit my resume to someone directly within Human Resources for review?

Can you tell me a little about the type of person you think is best suited for the position of Digital Asset Assistant?

Is there any other advice or guidance you would give me that would increase my chances of working at Getty Images?

Thanks so much for your time. This conversation has been very helpful, and I appreciate it.

Reflection and Notes: My contact with Ms. Fishman generally went well. I was nervous and sounded a little funny on the phone, but I managed to ask the questions I needed to. Thanks to my script and all my practicing, I only rambled a little bit. She was nice and gave me a lot of good information. I want to be more poised and less nervous the next time I call a contact.

6-3 Assignment: Utilizing Job Leads

Develop a plan for contacting leads using the list of job leads and the tips below.

Choose a lead to investigate and contact. It may be best to start with a lead that you feel is either weak or less desirable to you. This will allow you to practice before you move on to the more desirable and reliable leads.

Once background research and preparation have been completed, role-play how you will contact a job lead. Find a mentor, partner, vocational counselor, friend, or relative willing to work with you on several scenarios and practice your questions. If possible, practice over a few days.

Contact your lead and have a conversation with them. Enter the information into your job lead form.

1. The job lead you are following up on for the assignment
2. A description of how you will contact that job lead
3. A script of what you will say when contacting this job lead
4. After contacting the job lead and initiating a conversation, create a description of your experience
5. Once you complete the contact, consider the areas you want to improve. What went well? What didn't?

Module 7: The Cover Letter

7-1 Lesson: Writing an Effective Cover Letter

Now that you have identified several jobs you want to apply for, it's time to write a cover letter. A cover letter aims to persuade an employer to review your resume. A resume can make a good case for your relevant preparation for a job, but it will not tell the employer why you would be a great candidate. It also will not convey attitude and personality.

A cover letter allows you to point out specific experiences not fully covered in your resume that might make you a valuable or exceptional candidate for a given job.

A cover letter is a formal letter submitted as an accompaniment to a resume. A standard cover letter should run no longer than 600 words. It should be no more than five paragraphs. The wording should be clear, concise, typed without errors, and formatted correctly.

Cover Letter Tips

Style tips and other basics:

- Use formal, professional language; don't use slang, casual phrasing, or vocabulary.
- Be polite.
- Sell yourself: highlight your strengths and be positive.
- Use a standard and legible font such as Arial, Tahoma, or Verdana. Use a word processing system with spelling and grammar checks.

Have someone else carefully review your cover letter for mistakes, phrasing, and formatting issues before sending it.

If you are emailing your letter and resume to the company, you should copy and paste it into the email and attach it as a document along with the resume. Unless the employer requests otherwise, the cover letter and resume should be separate documents.

The cover letter should be no longer than five paragraphs and fit on one page.

Make sure the email address you use in all correspondence and the email address in all your documents is formal, like your first initial and last name.

Use formal letter format:

- Single spaced
- 11 to 12-point font
- Left justified with one-inch margins
- Use the same overall font style throughout all correspondence
- Return address on the top right of the page

- Left justified address of the business
- Leave a line empty

Greeting: "Dear Mr. Johnson:" "Dear Ms. Torra:"

As a last resort: "To whom it may concern,"

Leave a blank line.

First paragraph: Express your interest in the specific position at their company. Make sure to include the title of the position as it appears on the job posting, and if any reference numbers appear on the posting, include those as well. If you were referred by someone in your network or at the company, mention them by name.

In the subsequent paragraph, Mention specifics about the job or company that interest you; tie in personal experience or something that shows the extent of your research into the company or the position.

Third paragraph: Describe how you are a good candidate. Be specific and highlight the most important parts of your resume, or something your resume can't cover. This is the time to describe why you are a great fit for the job. What can you bring to the position? What can you bring to the company? Think of skills, personality traits, knowledge, training, experience, enthusiasm, passion, strong work ethic, etc. This may take up an additional paragraph.

Final paragraph: Thank them for taking the time to consider your application and state that you will reach out next week to see how the selection process is progressing.

Leave a line empty

Close with "Sincerely,"

Leave two or three lines of space for your signature

Your full name: "Daniel Stevens" or "Mr. Daniel Stevens"

7-2 Sample Cover Letters

Sample Cover Letter 1

To Nathaniel Strechay

Human Resources

I am applying for the Assistant Parts Inventory Manager position advertised on the City Times website. I have always had a passion for automobiles. I am extremely organized and have had prior positions that demonstrate my skills in inventory. As you will see from my included resume, I have two years of retail inventory and tracking experience for a large retailer. I have a good knowledge of automobile parts and automobiles in general.

I would be a great fit for this position and bring enthusiasm and a strong work ethic. I am experienced with computers, databases, and a variety of software. I feel my attributes would add to your already well-established business. Your reputation for great service precedes you, and I would be pleased to contribute to the continued success of your company.

I will reach out to you next week to see how the selection process is proceeding. You can also reach me at

nstrechay@genericemailaddress.com or 201-555-5555.

Sample Cover Letter 2

To Stan Vanderslooth / Huffman & Huffman

I am writing to express my interest in the Administrative Assistant position posted on monster.com.

This position is a perfect match for my background and skills. I am a graduate of Huntington High School where I took vocational training in executive assistant and secretarial services. I completed a work experience internship at Moises Automotive, where I served as an assistant to the executive assistant for three months. I received great on-the-job training there, and I am confident that with this experience, I would be an asset to your organization.

I am skilled at using Microsoft Office and a variety of other computer programs that would be necessary for fulfilling the duties outlined in the job posting. I have handled phones at two other organizations to gain experience with different phone systems. I am extremely organized and meticulous about my work duties.

I would love the opportunity to meet with you or other members of your organization to discuss this job in more detail. You may contact me at j.taylormasterson@genericemail.com or contact me at 304-555-5555.

Sincerely

Jason T. Masterson

7-3 Assignment: Write a Cover Letter

Use the tips provided in the lesson to write a cover letter that sells your application to an employer for a specific job you found through your prior work. Use a word processor with spell check.

Module 8: The Application

8-1 Lesson: Filling out a Job Application Form

When filling a position, employers use standard application forms to gather basic information about the candidates for every job. Applications may ask for much of the information you have included on your resume, but both are usually required in the hiring process. Most of the information you will need to fill out on an application can be found on your Personal Data Document and in your resume.

Seek Information

You will first want to find out how the employer usually handles or prefers to handle applications. Are the applications available online or by mail, or will you need to visit the office to pick one up? Do they accept applications only on certain days of the week or month or during certain hours? Do they prefer that candidates fill out the application at the office? Is it possible (or required) to complete and submit the application online?

When/If You Visit

When going to a potential employer's office to pick up or drop off an application, have a plan to deal with situations such as

- Assistance traveling to and orienting within the location
- Assistance filling out a printed application
- Reading any documents that may be required to review or sign

When you visit, your goal is to be as independent as possible and make it evident to the business or employer that you can handle any tasks there. It can be tough to negotiate new locations with confidence; it may take some practice. If you need assistance, advise your assistant that you will be taking the lead in addressing any issues or questions that arise.

Be prepared to explain why you are using assistance. It's important to be direct yet polite. If using portable assistive technology that will enable you to accomplish tasks independently, use it. Technology can be an interest grabber and create an opportunity to educate. People are often curious about and impressed by the effective use of technology. Some may feel that your use of technology demonstrates you are competent and will be able to accomplish job duties.

Practice First

Ideally, you will be able to obtain a copy of the application form before submitting it, so there will be time to practice filling it out. Everyone makes mistakes when completing applications due to small print, strange formats, and unfamiliar phrasing used by each business. Make a copy of the application and practice completing it prior to filling out the version you intend to turn in. When filling in your final application, be calm, take your time, and be prepared. If you are filling out a paper application, you will need to print legibly or have someone print legibly for you.

Keep a Record

Create a record system or journal to list application submissions.

Keep track of whom you contact on what date, when you obtain an application, when you apply, and with whom.

When following up with an employer:

When was the initial contact, and with whom? What was the method of contact? The contact information? Is there any other relevant information to document?

Review Samples

Review the sample application included in this section and become familiar with the information that must be completed.

8-2 Sample Application Log and Entries

Josie's Application Log

Employer: Getty Images

Date of Initial Contact: April 22, 2020

Method of contact: telephone

Contact information: Marion Fishman, 999-444-1112

Picked up application: April 24, 2020 (online)

Turned in application: April 30, 2020 (online)

Follow up: May 3, 2020, Getty HR office, spoke to Eddie Harcourt on the telephone, who said they had received the application, the cover letter, and the resume, and they will be in touch if they want to interview me.

Employment Application

NAME

First Name:

Middle Initial:

Last Name:

ADDRESS

Address 1 (number & street):

Address 2 (apt., suite, etc.):

City:

State:

Zip Code:

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone Number (Home or cell):

Phone Number (Business):

Email Address:

Position of Interest (Title):

Hours: (Select one) Full-time

Part-time

Other (Explain below)

Comment:

How did you hear about this position? _____

PAST EMPLOYMENT

(Most Recent)

Position Title:

Business Name:

Business Address:

Business Phone Number:

Website:

Supervisor's Name:

Supervisor's Phone Number:

May we contact this person? Yes/No

Hours per Week:

Start Date:

End Date:

Reason for Leaving:

Your Job Duties:

(Past Employment 2)

Position Title:

Business Name:

Business Address:

Business Phone Number:

Website:

Supervisor's Name: Supervisor's Phone Number:

May we contact this person? Yes/No Hours per Week:

Start Date:

End Date:

Reason for Leaving:

Your Job Duties:

EDUCATION/ TRAINING/ CERTIFICATION

(Please fill out applicable information) High School:

Year of Graduation:

High school Diploma: (Yes/No)

Kind of diploma if other than a high school diploma:

College/Post-Secondary/Vocational:

Name of Institution:

Years attended:

Degree or Certification:

Applicable Training:

REFERENCES

(List 2 References)

(Reference 1)

Name:

City/State:

Phone:

Relationship to Applicant:

(Reference 2) Name:

City/State:

Phone:

Relationship to Applicant:

I, _____ certify that the information that I have listed is accurate. I acknowledge that any misinformation provided will eliminate me from employment consideration.

SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

PRINT NAME:

8-3 Assignment: Create Your Application Log

Part 1: Create an Application Log

Create a log to keep track of:

- date of initial contact with employer
- method of contact
- contact information
- whom you interacted with at the place of employment
- when you obtained an application
- when you submitted an application
- when you followed up on an application
- information on all contacts following
- any other important information you would like to keep track of

Create a sample record and list the important events that would be a part of your application process.

Part 2: Application Practice

Fill out the sample application.

CONGRATULATIONS! You have reached the end of Course 3: Finding Employment.

Please be sure to save the assignments you have completed.

Please continue to...

Course 4: The Interview

COURSE 4: The Interview

[Introduction to the Job Seeker's Toolkit](#)

The Job Seeker's Toolkit aims to help you acquire essential skills necessary for successful employment. The skills and topics reviewed will help you move towards a successful job search and beyond. The Job Seeker's Toolkit, through a series of five courses, will help in building your own toolkit to assist you in preparing for the world of work.

The five courses are structured into modules and activities that build on the content and exercises of the preceding material. For this reason, we recommend working your way through the courses in chronological order and completing each assignment along the way. However, if you have an interview tomorrow, feel free to skip ahead for tips!

The effort you put into building your own Toolkit will provide you with a foundation fundamental for success in the world of work.

The Job Seeker's Toolkit is built to accompany you through the job search and the employment lifecycle, from building self-awareness to determining the best-fit career path, identifying employment opportunities, preparing for an interview, all the way to maintaining employment and advancing your career.

Course 4: The purpose of this course is to assist you in preparing for a job interview. We imagine that you have been called for an interview for this course. In earlier courses, the materials and logs you prepared will assist with some of your interview preparation. Be prepared to refer back to materials that you have previously worked on.

From the time of an interview request, the actual interview could be a day or a week. One never knows what timeframe you will be working within. It is wise to maintain readiness for interviewing.

The main goal of an interview is to become further noticed and stand out as a competent, motivated, and hardworking candidate.

Course 4: The Interview

Module 1: Disclosure Review & Disability Statement

1-1 Lesson: Reviewing and Practicing the Disclosure Strategy and Disability Statement

Prior to your interview, review the disability disclosure information provided in Course 3 and revisit your previously prepared scenarios. While these materials offer valuable guidance, feel free to modify them based on further reflection and adapt them to the specific context of your interview. Remember, these are not fixed scripts but flexible tools to facilitate open and honest communication.

Reviewing the materials in Course 3 may relieve some anxiety by allowing you to review and reflect on topics you have thought about while not having other concerns.

Persons with disabilities encounter disclosure of disability throughout the employment process. While preparing for an interview, you should be well versed on disclosure and have practiced your disability statement through role-play activities. Just before your interview, you may want to do one more role-play.

Module 2: Company Research

2-1 Module: Taking the First Step Toward Interview Preparation

Before interviewing with an employer, doing some investigative work is important. Research can be the key to having a good interview and impressing an employer, as discussed in Course 3.

The interview preparation process should always include acquiring solid knowledge about:

- potential employer goals, mission, and vision
- market/industry forecast, as well as the geographic area
- major competitors

Check a company's website and social media to read information about the company. To learn more about the company, visit its website and social media pages. You can also search for news articles or stories about the company on news websites and social media platforms. This information can provide a glimpse into the company's current issues, past successes, and role in the community and industry.

Remember: Whenever using the Internet for research, determine if the information located is reliable and credible. Sites that consist mainly of user-generated or single-author content, such as Wikipedia, are often unreliable sources of information. A large part of proper Internet research is understanding who the sources are and how much you can trust them.

Below are some preliminary questions to give an idea of the information to gather on a company you will be interviewing at. Note which questions have answers you cannot find through online research.

You can ask these questions during the interview or at a follow-up meeting.

Basic Business Facts

- How large is the company? How many employees does the company have?
- Do employees remain with the company for a long time? You can often find this information on the company website. Employee service awards may indicate work duration. Employee biographies on their website may show employment information.
- Does the company have more than one location?
- Where is the position of interest located?
- What is the basic purpose of the business?
- What services does the business provide, or what does it sell?
- Is the business for-profit, governmental, or non-profit?
- How long has the business been in existence?
- Have the same people owned it the whole time, or have there been shifts in ownership?
- What is the basic history of the company?

- Who are the people who currently run the company?
- Who runs the department that you wish to work in?
- How many people work in the department you wish to work in?
- How are jobs handled within the department?
- How large is the department your job would be housed within?
- Where does your position fit into the company's structure?
- What do the published employee biographies sound like?
- What sorts of backgrounds do the employees have?

Market Research

- If there are published annual reports, what do they indicate for the financial health and history of the company?
- Where and how does the company make its money?
- Who buys what the company sells? Other businesses? Consumers?
- How does the company sell their products or services?
- Has the company been selling the same thing for long, or has it changed and adjusted to trends, advances, or demand?
- How much of a market share does the company have? Are they the major player for their products or services in your city? Your state? The country? Worldwide?
- How much has the company grown in the past year? Five years?
- Is the market expanding? Staying the same? Shrinking?

Company Competition

- Who else is selling or doing the same thing?
- Who are the company's major competitors?
- How do the competitors compare in size, revenue, products/services, market share, history, and reputation?
- Is the main competition a new start-up or a long-established company?
- Is there any difference regarding consumers between your target company and its competitors?
- Can you find published annual reports for the competition? What do they tell you about the competition's health and history?

Workforce, Work Structure, and Schedule

- Does the business have different shifts?
- Does the business allow flextime to meet transportation or family needs?
- How long is a typical shift?
- Do the employees' shifts switch or rotate?
- Does the employer operate on a set schedule?
- Are employees required to work evenings, weekends, or mandatory overtime?

- Are there clues in the published material about what kind of worker does well at the company? From what you have found, do you sense that workers at the company are happy and satisfied?

2-2 Sample Pre-Interview Research

In the below example, a fictitious nonprofit is being shown. Remember to gather your information from various sources if the organization being researched is a nonprofit, educational institution, publicly traded corporation, or state or local government.

Belinda's Pre-Interview Company Research

Target Company: Housing Support for All

Location: Anywhere USA

What I know: Nonprofit that has been around for 10 years. They have grown since their inception. They are looking to expand their services into nearby counties.

Basic Business Facts

The company is managed by a board of 17 volunteer directors and a staff of 10 employees. One staff member handles administrative tasks, and another works part-time on payroll. Apart from the executive director, the remaining employees provide direct assistance to individuals in need. Based on the company's website, staff members tend to remain with the organization for at least four years or more.

Currently offices are located in Monroe county. If they start serving people to the west and the south I might want to ask about if they plan on moving to a more central location based on the geographic area they will be serving.

The job posting says that 3 additional counties will be covered, but, it does not specify what counties. So, I should ask what counties I would need to travel to. Transportation may be an issue for me; I will research public transportation options. Additionally, I should look on social media to see if they have any posts prior to my interview.

What is the basic purpose of the business? It is a social service industry.

What services does the business provide? Social casework, assistance with locating housing, substance use counseling, and a hotline for unhoused individuals to call for support... They also host some 12-step support groups.

Nonprofit funding comes from the county social services, they also in the past have received some state funding. Annually they hold a golf outing to raise funds.

According to their website, they started 10 years ago.

Amanda Sanchez was their executive director-and she retired 5 years ago. Their current Executive Director is Jose Rivera-his bio says that he started out as a social work intern with the agency and then began working for them after his internship A question to ask would be do they promote staff from within the organization?

Basic history: Started out as a hotline and providing transportation to shelters within the county. Services originally were all volunteer based. Paid staff began working as part of the agency within the first year of it starting. They have expanded services over the past 10 years based on trends the organization has tracked. Currently 7 staff who provide direct services to consumers. It appears as if everyone reports to the Executive Director.

I am unable to tell who runs the area I would be possibly working under. A question on my interview would be: Can you tell me about the structure of the organization and to whom I would report to if I were to be considered for the position I am interviewing for?

Additional questions along these lines would be:

How many staff would I be working with doing the same work as me?

Where does your position fit into the company's structure?

From newspaper articles about the agency as well as staff bios on the website, the staff enjoys the work they are doing.

What sorts of backgrounds do the employees have? Social Work, Community Mental Health Counselor, and peer support specialists.

Market Research

Annual reports show a continued increase of services provided as well as the numbers of consumers served.

Where and how does the company make its money? Fundraising through individual and corporate donors, county funding and grants.

Social Services agency has requirements from county contracts as well as other funders.

They have grown their services based on tracking consumer needs.

What is the company's market share? For some of its services, it is the sole provider in the county, while other services are also offered by two smaller organizations. They are looking to expand into neighboring countries- thus increasing services and staff.

How much has the company grown in the past year? Five years? Looking at the annual report from 3 years ago there has been a twenty-percent increase of consumers served.

Is the market expanding? Staying the same? Shrinking? There will always be a need for social services. I may want to ask during my interview if they see changes in service needs during specific times of the year.

Company Competition

There are 2 other organizations providing shelter to the unhoused. 1 shelter only opens between November 1 and April 15th. (Their website says they are a cold weather shelter only.) The other organization is only for men and they do not house minors or anyone under 21-years old.

How do the competitors compare in size, revenue, products/services, market share, history, and reputation? The cold weather shelter has 1 paid staff member and all other services are provided by volunteers. Their locations change based on what community organizations have allowed them to use space to setup their cots each evening for the week.

Is the main competition a new start-up or a long-established company? There really does not appear to be much by the way of competing organizations. The other organizations are older but smaller and have not expanded.

Is there any difference regarding consumers between your target company and its competitors? The organization supports individuals as well as families with children-including school age children. The other organizations do not serve families.

Workforce, Work Structure, and Schedule

Does the business have different shifts? Yes.

Does the business allow flextime to meet transportation or family needs? Will have to ask this once offered a job.

How long is a typical shift? Good question to ask during the interview.

Do the employees' shifts switch or rotate? Good question to ask during the interview.

Does the employer operate on a set schedule? Good question for during the interview.

Are employees required to work evenings, weekends, or mandatory overtime? Good question to ask during the interview.

Are there clues in the published material about what kind of worker does well at the company? From what you have found, do you sense that workers at the company are happy and satisfied? It appears that workers enjoy their jobs. I looked at information posted by college interns over the past 3 years. They shared that they had a positive experience.

Module 3: Self-Description

3-1 Lesson: Preparing an Effective Answer to a Common and Challenging Question

Almost every interview will have an open-ended self-description opportunity: "So, tell me about yourself." Or "Is there anything else you want to share about yourself?" The interviewer may start or end the interview with this question.

A concise, organized, and informative response is where you can shine! Think about how you would answer the question. We recommend you role-play or rehearse answering this kind of question; the more precise and concise the response, the better the interviewer will feel about spending their time interviewing you.

Your response can establish your personality and beliefs for the interviewer.

The response should cover the ground that you have thoughtfully considered. An answer should aim for an answer that runs between 90 seconds and two minutes in duration.

Below is a bulleted list of areas to cover, with some tips to keep you on the right track.

- Remember that your answer should be under two minutes in length.
- Mention one or two positive personal traits: enthusiastic, hardworking, diligent, organized, patient, etc.
- Talk briefly about where you grew up and your family. Example: "I grew up in North Central New Jersey with my parents and two brothers."
- Mention any accomplishments (e.g., Eagle Scout, student body president, athlete, etc.), but keep it short and to the point.
- Transition to work-related information or information that will demonstrate why you would be an asset to the business.
- Speak about any training or related experience that would be relevant to the position: degrees, courses, certifications, work experience, etc.
- If you volunteer for organizations or charities, include this information after discussing job-relevant training and paid experience.
- Have a precise closing for your answer.
- Only elaborate if the interviewer asks you to clarify something you mentioned.

Interviewers value concise answers that have specific points. Many interviewers must ensure that interviewees meet the requirements for the position. Keep this in mind as you craft your response to questions.

- Use appropriate language and grammar.
- Do not share irrelevant or negative information.
- Be calm and composed.
- Pace your answer; don't rush.

Your preparation for this answer will serve you well in any interview.

3-2 Assignment: Self-Description and Disclosure Review

Write a short self-description that answers the question: "So, tell me about yourself."

Keep your answer between 90 seconds and two minutes. Once you have written and polished your answer, memorize it and practice reciting it to a friend, family member, or teacher.

Please remember to conduct a thorough review of your Disclosure Strategy and Disability Statement while you also create a list of the facts you already know about the target company. Then, create a list of questions to which you would like to find answers. Use the questions in this section as a guide; think of additional questions specific to the position, industry, company, or location.

Module 4: Reading Questions and Taking Notes During the Interview

4-1 Lesson: Taking and Using Notes During Your Interview

It is perfectly acceptable to take notes during an interview. It is also okay to have questions written before the interview in a format that you can efficiently and independently access as someone who is blind or has low vision.

Think about what media works best for you to read off questions. Do you feel more comfortable reading braille than listening to and repeating back speech output? Consider environmental factors that may influence how your vision functions. If there is bright lighting, will this impact your ability to read from your tablet visually? Choosing a media format that works best for you is a personal choice. Selecting your media preference is something that you should consider before your interview.

Be prepared to explain any assistive technology you use for notetaking, including a phone or tablet app.

We do not recommend recording an interview on a digital device. States have different privacy laws, and the interviewer may view a request to record them as a privacy issue. Additionally, in some professions, recording clients is not acceptable. You do not want to "lead" a potential employer to think you can only take notes by recording a conversation that may violate your profession's code of conduct or a violation of company standards.

Practicing reading your questions and learning the best way to take notes while doing a mock interview may help you become more relaxed during your actual interview.

When referencing your questions, you want to show that you can clearly state the question and then jot down answers if necessary.

While at your interview, be sure to obtain the names, emails, and mailing addresses of everyone you meet. Sending thank-you letters is a critical part of post-interview etiquette. Be sure to secure the correct spelling of the names of those you meet with during the interview. This is another reason to have a way to take notes during your interview.

Consider the differences between face-to-face interviews and virtual interviews. Are there any potential accessibility considerations depending on how your interview is conducted?

Module 5: Addressing Employer Concerns

5-1 Lesson: Addressing Employer Concerns for Hiring a Person with a Disability

Unless they have done so in the past, employers may be unsure of hiring a person who is blind or low vision.

You may be the first person with blindness or low vision your employer has interviewed or met. Being nervous about something you don't understand or have no experience with is natural. In the context of your professional relationships, your job is not to educate your potential employers but to make them more comfortable working with you. By law, employers can't ask candidates about disabilities unless they are visually apparent. If you proactively address the areas most employers have concerns about and discuss your situation with tact, grace, and a positive spin, this education could help increase your chances of getting hired.

You will want to address an employer's concerns about accessibility and transportation.

A potential employer could think that a worker who is blind or low vision would constantly need assistance from other employees. Of course, this is not true, particularly with many of today's jobs being computer-based and, therefore, more accessible to persons who are blind or low vision. Technology decreases workplace limitations and can help overcome most obstacles. However, potential employers might not understand this. You may be able to address this concern by giving examples from your past work experience or by talking about how you use technology to help you be productive. Bringing questions to read or taking notes during the interview will provide time to use your technology, hard copy braille, or large print.

Accessibility

Accessibility can mean all sorts of things to an employer. A common concern is how you will be able to acquire the information contained in written materials. Will they have to provide braille versions? What must they do to make a computer system accessible to you? Will you need special equipment?

If you have low vision, you can explain your use of a video magnifier, handheld magnifier, or screen magnifier. Screen reader users will want to explain how the software works and can refer employers to websites if needed. Braille should not be an issue because you can convert your required documents. Depending on your needs, you may need an embosser or refreshable braille display. You don't need to detail how the technology works; you are not trying to educate the employer. It would be best to discuss it in a way that demonstrates you can join an established business workflow quickly and with little disruption to your coworkers' standard business practices.

Transportation

Transportation is another area potential employers can have concerns about. Let them know you regularly use the bus system, the subway, rideshare, or walk. Mention how you got to the location that day. For example, "Oh, I took the bus here today and had time to stop to get a bottle of water in the lobby. It's great that your building has those vending machines downstairs." You want to ease their fears and show them your transportation is not their concern.

Employer Resources

An interview is a good opportunity to ease these standard employer concerns proactively. An interview can

also be a good time to talk about the benefits of hiring a person with a disability. After all, persons with disabilities tend to be highly reliable and loyal employees.

The For Employers sections of APH CareerConnect and NSITE Connect have information employers may be interested in reviewing. Remember that this is a resource you can recommend to them when on a job interview. It's a resource available to you as well. Review the For Employers section to familiarize yourself with the facts and topics.

5-1 Assignment: Addressing Employer Concerns

Write out what you would say to an employer to answer each concern below.

- Safety
- Productivity
- Accessibility
- Access to print materials (letters, forms, etc.)
- Messages between coworkers
- Transportation (getting to and from work)

Module 6: Answering Interview Questions

6-1 Lesson: Preparing Answers to Common Interview Questions

Most interviews include common questions designed to allow the employer to learn more about the interviewee and the potential to be a good fit with the organization. While speaking with you, the interviewer will most likely take notes on your answers. With good preparation for interview questions, you can portray yourself in the best light and have clear and concise responses practiced and ready.

We have discussed preparing for the open-ended self-description question. In addition to this self-description category, there are a few additional categories of common interview questions.

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Future/commitment
- Work ethic/work personality
- Biggest accomplishment
- Ethics
- Fun/Leisure
- Your questions

Strengths and Weaknesses

"What is your biggest strength?" "Name three weaknesses and tell me how you are working to improve on them."

To prepare an answer to these types of questions, begin by referring back to section 1.5. Review the Skills and Abilities assignment. Think about which skills will benefit the organization and the position the most, and think about how best to talk about these skills clearly and concisely.

The more challenging part of this question is talking about your weaknesses. It's best to start by phrasing positive attributes as weaknesses. Some interviewers will call you out on this, and you will need an alternate answer, but it's safest to begin with positives. Here are a few examples:

"I can become compulsive about performing well at work."

"I have a hard time saying 'no' to work assignments, and I end up taking on a lot."

When developing an answer for weaknesses, don't re-use a quality or qualities you are using as a strength.

You should also prepare a less favorable weakness to explain how you deal with or are working to improve. Here are some examples:

"I tend to overextend myself at times, but I'm getting better at achieving a good balance."

"My spelling is not the best, but I use spell check and an online dictionary to counteract this issue."

"I have been working on time management. I now use a calendar app to set reminders and keep track of due dates so I can get tasks done promptly."

Future/Commitment

"Where do you see yourself in five (two, ten, fifteen) years?"

Companies want to hire people interested in making a long-term commitment and who want to grow with

the company and participate in its success. Be imaginative when answering this question: what are your aspirations, ambitions, and vision for yourself at the company? They are not going to follow up with you in five years to see if you have accomplished what you stated in your interview, so don't be shy!

One example of an answer:

"In five years, I see myself in an upper-management position that allows me to have a wider influence on the company's growth and direction."

Work Ethic/Work Personality

"How would you describe your work personality? Can you give me examples from your prior positions?"
"Why did you leave your last position?" "What did you like about your last job? What did you dislike about it?"

Employers ask these sorts of questions to get a sense of the kind of employee you will make. The interviewer is looking for qualities that will be a good fit for the position and the company and a personality that will fit in with the professional culture of the workplace.

If you do not have prior work experience, answer these questions by explaining how you have demonstrated work-appropriate skills through volunteering or participating in community organizations, clubs, school, and other activities.

Beware of over-sharing in your answer to questions about your prior positions. If you were fired, you should be honest about it but portray it as a learning experience that has made you a better employee.

If you resigned or moved on to a different position, here are some examples of short answers that don't give too much information:

"I left the organization because I felt underutilized."

"I felt it was time to move on to a better opportunity."

"I was offered a better opportunity."

"I went back to school."

"I relocated ..."

Ethics

"What would you do if you found out another employee was stealing or lying about their hours?"

Some employers have had issues with employees taking advantage of the company or being dishonest while on the job, e.g., lying about the hours they work, skimming money from the register, stealing company supplies, using company resources (cars, credit cards) for their own needs, or observing coworkers doing these activities without reporting them.

While most applicants will not admit if they've done these things, employers will try to understand your ethical sensibilities by discussing your standards for reporting coworkers. An example of an answer:

"I would report any employee I felt was behaving dishonestly to the appropriate individual in charge of company matters. I think trust between an employer and employee is very important."

Biggest Accomplishment

"Name the one accomplishment of which you are most proud so far in your career."

Choose an accomplishment that shows your work ethic, determination, or skills related to the job. If you don't have a work history, choose an achievement such as completing training or getting a degree. An example:

"My biggest accomplishment so far is completing my training as a chef. It took a lot of discipline and hard work, but I learned a tremendous amount and feel it has prepared me well for my chosen career."

Fun/Leisure

"What are your favorite hobbies? What do you do with your free time?"

These questions help employers get to know more about you. Choose a hobby or leisure activity that is appropriate and not controversial. Remember that this is a job interview, and the interviewer will judge your answer. Some safe areas are sports, music, literature, crafts, movies, theatre, hiking/camping, writing/arts, and philanthropic work. Philanthropic or volunteer work is always good to mention, as it shows your commitment and interest in a specific area.

Your Questions

"Do you have any questions for me?"

It is common to be asked this question at the end of an interview. You may be asked this question at the end of each meeting if you have interviewed with multiple people or had more than one interview.

Try and ask three questions.

Make sure to have your questions clear and concise.

Some overall topic areas are:

- Clarification of something from the interview
- Relating directly to the job
- Relating directly to the company
- Getting to know the interviewer

If the interviewer answers one of your questions, be prepared to ask different questions.

Examples of questions include:

"Is this a new position? If yes, why did you feel the need to add it? If not, how long has the prior employee held the position? Why did they leave the position?"

"What are the hours typically?"

"What is the turnover rate like for this position?"

"Why do you like working here?"

"Describe the ideal employee for this position."

"Does this position have the opportunity to grow?"

"What is the possibility of advancement within the business?"

"Can I provide you with more information to help you better understand the quality of work I would provide?"

"Does the company offer benefits? What kind?"

"What is the next step in the hiring process (only if they have not mentioned this prior)?"

Preparing for an interview is important. While we have recommended role-playing and rehearsing for an interview, the questions may not be the same as you have prepared. However, you can use the answers you prepared for different questions. The goal of preparing is to make sure you are not caught off guard in an interview and, therefore, are likely to give a less-than-ideal answer. You should also be able to interview with less anxiety because you will know you are well-prepared.

6-2 Sample Answers to Common Interview Questions

Josie's Answers to Common Interview Questions

"Tell me a little about yourself."

I was born and raised in Southern California. My parents are hardworking university professors, and I have two younger brothers in college. Even when I was young, I was always interested in computer programming, math, and databases. I have this instinct to look for improvements to existing solutions or make something work more efficiently. For example, back in junior high school, I put together a little database that organized the refreshment schedule for my volunteer service organization. You could make adjustments easily and print out an updated schedule whenever needed. I think I apply the same drive to the professional challenges I have now, only the challenges are more complex than a refreshment schedule! My educational interests and independent training have helped me get the knowledge and background I need to solve more complicated data-centered situations.

My fluency with Cold Fusion, SQL, and even Access helps me think of fast solutions and workarounds to data problems, and I'm rather obsessed with learning more and keeping my skills up to date. During my senior year, I completed three extra certifications for C++ just because I felt I had some weak spots in my knowledge base. I'm also invested in maintaining good data protocols and love working with huge amounts of data and complicated databases. Last summer, I interned at Apex Systems and helped them whip their inventory database into shape. I restructured and customized their system, imported the data from the old structure, did a quality check, and then wrote some custom interfaces so their inventory clerks wouldn't have to deal with many technicalities. It was a huge improvement, and I loved it.

That's why I think I'd be such a good match here at Getty- it's the kind of data environment I thrive in.

"What is your biggest strength?"

My biggest strength is the passion and commitment I bring to the job. I love database and asset management and am invested in performing at a high standard in this kind of work. I understand the consequences of mistakes in large database management, which gives me a good perspective and intensity in what I do. Passion is also my main motivator. I'm passionate about constantly improving the work that I do and helping others improve the work they are doing.

"Tell me two of your weaknesses and how you compensate for them."

I can tend to over-focus when I'm working on a problem. I think this tendency can work to my advantage because it means I can tackle difficult problems, and I don't stop until I've arrived at a solution. However, it is sometimes better to back off and take a wider view. I'm working on taking an assessment in each work situation to apply my tenacity and direction appropriately and effectively.

I love solving problems with computers, so I tend to always approach a challenge by applying a computer-based solution. A faster or more elegant solution is sometimes available in the "analog" world. I recently realized that I had complicated my mom's life by setting her up with a digital calendar. It's so much easier for her to just write something on a paper calendar, and it's a more reliable way to keep track of her life.

"Where do you see yourself in five years?"

I hope to be a Digital Asset Manager at Getty in five years. I really admire this company, and I can tell by the biographies you have on your site that you have a committed and talented workforce. I want to work for a company like yours and to make a long-term commitment. I think I will learn quickly and show myself to be a good leader and great worker.

"Where do you see yourself in ten years?"

I would love to be Director of Digital Asset Management or at least the heir apparent to the position. I love this kind of work and want to apply my skills to areas of broader influence.

"What prior experience do you have that would relate to this position?"

All of my experience and education relate to this position. I've been a tech/math/computer nerd my whole life. It's just who I am. I've interned at various local businesses every summer, helping them with computer issues, from setting up networks to overhauling inventory databases. I recently helped the library at my school troubleshoot a database problem. You will see on my resume that I have many purely self-motivated certifications. I didn't do it for school; I did it because I wanted to learn and then apply that learning to solutions."

"What would you do if a big project was due the next day and it was unfinished?"

If the situation were in my or my team's control, I would keep working until it's finished. That's actually my natural tendency, anyway. I don't like leaving things unfinished, and I hate missing deadlines. If the situation involved other constituencies, I'd work with them to devise a plan and provide whatever work or service was needed to help finish the project. I'm very much a roll-up-my-sleeves sort of person. I'll Xerox, staple, make deliveries, whatever it takes. I don't mind going outside of my job description if it will help the team or company.

"How do you handle deadlines and meeting them? Give me an example."

Deadlines are as much a part of a project's requirements as something like the data structure is. I take deadlines very seriously. While I know that something beyond everyone's control can occasionally come up, I feel that deadlines should be reachable with proper planning and commitment. The most recent deadline example I can give you is when I had to turn in a final database design for my SQL programming certification, and my little brother dropped his coke on my laptop and killed it. It was 9:00 PM, and the project was due the next day. I negotiated a ride over to my friend Kate's house. She was the only other person I knew who had SQL, and she let me work in the living room until I finished. I had to start the project from about mid-way, but I completed it by 2:00 AM. It was a good database design, too!

"Can you give me an example of what you did when dealing with an extremely angry customer on the phone?"

I haven't had to deal with angry customers, but I have had to deal with upset clients. They were not upset with me, but just upset and frustrated that their computer situation wasn't working. I've found the best way to handle it is to be a very proactive and calm problem solver, to get them confident that I'll fix it, and to get them out of the frustrating situation as soon as possible.

"What would you say is your biggest accomplishment and why?"

My biggest accomplishment is probably the database overhaul I did for Apex. It's not the most complicated database I've worked on. Still, there were many different people I had to talk to, many priorities to organize and address, and a lot of negotiation. I was proud of the end product because it helped them and made their work easier.

"What would you do if you found out another employee was stealing or lying about their hours?"

I would talk to my supervisor about it. I don't want to work in an environment where that's happening. It's just not my style.

"If a customer mistakenly gave you a \$20 bill instead of a single, how would you handle this matter?"

I would tell them they gave me a \$20 bill.

"What is a hobby or leisure activity that you participate in?"

I like kayaking. It's enjoyable to be out on the water.

"Do you participate in any charities or volunteer work? If so, what?"

I volunteer at a food pantry and am a relief caller for a peer-to-peer helpline.

"Do you have any questions for me?"

Can you tell me more about the structure of the DAM division? Has it been in place long?

What are the company's priorities when it comes to digital asset management?

Would you describe the DAM division as working well right now?

What does the future look like for Getty and the stock imagery industry?

I'm curious how you would describe the difference between Getty and Corbis.

6-3 Assignment: Answer Common Interview Questions

Write an answer for each question below and practice responding to these questions and any others you think an interviewer may ask. There are many internet resources that you can find that list common interview questions. Aim to answer each question in under two minutes. Once you feel prepared, ask a friend, family

member, instructor, counselor, or teacher to ask these questions and any others they think might come up in your interview. Practice answering from memory in a calm and collected manner.

1. Self-description

- "Tell me a little about yourself."

2. Strengths & Weaknesses

- "What is your biggest strength?"
- "Tell me two of your weaknesses and how you compensate for them."

3. Future/Commitment

- "Where do you see yourself in five years?" "Where do you see yourself in ten years?"

4. Work Ethic/Work Personality

- "What prior experience do you have that would relate to this position?"
- "What would you do if a big project was due the next day and it was unfinished?"
- "How do you handle deadlines and meeting them? Give me an example."
- "Can you give me an example of what you did when dealing with an extremely angry customer on the phone?"

5. Biggest Accomplishment

- "What would you say is your biggest accomplishment and why?"
- "What is your biggest accomplishment, and how did you accomplish this task?"

6. Ethics

- "What would you do if you found out another employee was stealing or lying about their hours?"
- "If a customer mistakenly gave you a \$20 bill instead of a single, how would you handle this matter?"

7. Fun/Leisure

- "What is a hobby or leisure activity that you participate in?"
- "Do you participate in any charities or volunteer work? If so, what?"

8. Any Questions?

- "Do you have any questions for me?"

Module 7: Preparing for the Interview

7-1 Lesson: Getting Ready to Present Yourself to the Potential Employer

You have written out and practiced your answers to common interview questions. You have printed out clean copies of your resume and reviewed the published job posting, so the published requirements are fresh in your mind. What is left to do?

Bringing Technology to the Interview

If you are planning to use technology to take notes, be sure to have a full battery. Think about how you will describe the tasks performed by the technology. Think about how the tasks relate to the job and how the technology may help you do the job.

If you choose to discuss technology beyond what may be necessary for your interview, create a checklist that lists all the devices (high- and low-tech) you would use on the job. Next to each device listed, indicate whether you will bring the actual device or what you will bring to explain or provide as an example. Bringing the devices with you is ideal, but bring pictures, videos, website links, or a description if you cannot. You could even create a short video or list of links to videos or sites demonstrating your devices. The ultimate purpose is to show your methods of accessing information and completing work tasks. If you do create a video, explain that you created the video independently.

Remember that most employers are unaware of how a person who is blind or low vision would perform basic tasks. So, how can we expect them to understand how more complex tasks can be done independently? You want to show items quickly and efficiently. It is less likely that an interviewer will review these materials later in time.

Presentation

Dressing for the Interview

Dressing well can make the difference between getting a job and being eliminated as a candidate. Wear clean clothing (no stains), neat (no holes or tears), pressed (not wrinkled), and appropriately sized. Use a person you trust to view your clothing to see if it fits well. You should go to stores and try on clothing to find out what looks good and is comfortable. Trying on clothes is necessary because clothing from different brands will fit differently, even in the same size.

Different employers will have different dress codes. If you can ask someone about the dress code before your interview, do so. If you cannot, always err on the more formal/professional side.

Below are some general guidelines and tips for dressing appropriately for an interview. All organizations and jobs are different, but it is safest to dress conservatively, especially for a job interview. The best bet is to dress in a formal/professional manner when attending an interview. Review, try on, launder, iron, and hang your clothing a week before your interview so you have time to make adjustments or get things dry-cleaned if needed.

Financial Assistance with Interview Attire

Sometimes, Vocational Rehab or job centers have stipends for purchasing clothing. Also, Dress for Success and similar companies provide second-hand professional clothing.

Know your sizes and try items on before purchasing and before an interview- clothing that fits properly is important to present a professional appearance.

Dress Tips

Formal/Professional

Men:

- Conservative suit (black, navy blue, or gray)
- Sports coat, dress shirt, slacks, dress socks, dress shoes, tie, and belt (or suspenders)
- Colors should match
- Shirts should be a conservative solid color with a tie that matches
- Shirt patterns should be subtle and minimal
- The belt should be the same color as your shoes. If wearing a black or navy suit, wear a black belt, black shoes, and black or navy socks.
- A watch and/or one ring can be appropriate if it's formal. If you have a talking watch, silence the alarm; talking watches can be a distraction.
- Dress shoes should be polished and in good condition.

Formal clothing does not have to be expensive or a top brand. Look for sales or shop at a local thrift store. A tuxedo is not appropriate for an interview. Men should always wear a white undershirt beneath their dress shirt to present a conservative appearance and prevent sweating through the shirt. Undergarments should not be visible, and clothing should not be transparent or form-fitting.

Women:

- Dress suit/pantsuit
- Jacket with slacks and an appropriate blouse
- Jacket with a knee-length or longer skirt
- Jewelry should be minimal and subtle: small earrings (if any), one necklace
- Clothing should be conservative and fit properly
- Formal clothing does not have to be expensive or a top brand. Look for sales or shop at a local thrift store
- The neckline should be conservative and not low. (Very little skin should be showing)
- Shoes should be a dark color (black, brown, navy), closed-toe, with a low or flat heel

If you wear stockings or pantyhose, they should be a neutral shade that matches your skin tone. Undergarments should not be visible, and clothing should not be transparent or form-fitting. Handbags should be well-kept, moderate in size, neat in appearance, and devoid of distracting ornamentation.

Business Casual (varies from business to business)

Men:

- Dress shirt (button-down shirt that is striped or a solid color) and slacks (Dockers/khaki type pants), socks, belt, and dress shoes
- Some businesses will require a tie
- Certain businesses may allow a polo shirt as part of business casual instead of a dress shirt (if you are unsure, stay conservative)

Women:

- Conservative blouse or shirt, knee-length or longer skirt, dress of an appropriate length and neckline
- Slacks can be substituted for a skirt/blouse or dress
- Pantyhose/stockings might be required or recommended, depending on the company culture or location
- Minimal jewelry

Casual

For Men and Women:

For most interviews, you should never dress any more casually than the business casual guidelines above. You may adjust your wardrobe as appropriate after you have been hired. If you are dressing for a more labor-intensive job, ask what they suggest you wear to the interview. You should avoid inappropriate or casual clothing even when interviewing for a more labor-intensive job.

Regional/Cultural/Organizational Differences

Some regions of the country and world have different professional dress conventions. Respect the organization's values and culture you are applying to work within. Some regions are more casual about their dress because of the climate. For example, you usually do not wear pantyhose in Florida or Hawaii. Businesses in a region of the country known to have a traditional culture may be more conservative about dress codes. All of this is important to research and understand before an interview. Many businesses have written dress codes for employees (and interviewees) to follow.

7-1 Assignment: Getting Ready

Create a checklist of materials and technology for which you will demonstrate, describe, or relay resources at your interview.

Make sure you have an appropriate interview outfit that is clean and ready to wear. If you do not, list the items you need to find and go shopping.

Module 8: Interview Coaching and Role-Play

8-1 Lesson: Preparing for the Real Thing

Knowing how to answer interview questions is not enough when preparing for an interview. You will want to practice repeatedly to develop a personal interview style and build confidence. There is no "pause" or "stop" button in a live interview, nor are there "do-overs." When interviewing for a job, there is only one opportunity to make a good impression! Practice your interview skills through role-playing and mock interviews to prepare.

Role-Playing an Interview

Role-playing an interview is a great way to practice your interview skills. Find a friend, family member, teacher, rehabilitation professional, or other person you trust to help you- someone who has experience with interviews and will be comfortable giving you constructive feedback that identifies your strengths and weaknesses. Once you find someone willing to help, prepare information on a job you would be interested in getting and provide it to them. Your helper can accurately represent the kind of interview you might encounter. Ask your helper to develop a range of interview questions, from the most basic to the most challenging.

When you conduct the role-playing exercise, have your helper start as the interviewer. Try to put all the skills you have learned so far into practice when you answer questions. Do not forget to pay attention to how you present yourself. If you have trouble answering a question, you and your helper can talk about improvements, try out different answers, and hone responses until successful.

Since this is only practice, switch roles. See how your partner answers the same questions. Often, there are many good answers to the same question. Then, switch back to the original roles. It may be helpful to record these role-plays to help you identify what you can improve on. Role-playing situations from an interview can help you feel more comfortable with difficult questions. They can help you prepare to address issues that may arise during the interview.

Mock Interviews

A mock interview is a more formal role-play with someone who will be nonpartisan and more critical of you as an interviewee. Preferably, your mock interviewer will be someone you do not interact with often. Use your network, friends, and family to find a business professional willing to do a realistic interview with you. It would be preferable if the person has interview experience as an interviewee or interviewer. Provide your mock interviewer with as much information as possible about the job you are interested in, and make sure that you answer any questions they may have about the exercise before beginning the mock interview. Your mock interviewer should understand that the goal is to make the exercise as realistic as possible, and you should explain that you are looking for feedback on any and all aspects of your interview skills. This includes appearance and first impression down to how you answer specific questions.

The mock interview should be a full run-through with no stopping. The more authentic the experience, the more valuable it will be. Dress appropriately, arrive on time, and conduct yourself from start to finish as if you were in a real interview.

Once the interview is over, ask for feedback. It also could be helpful to get written notes or points to improve on and areas you excelled in. Do not take the feedback personally. The information provided by your mock

interviewer is valuable and can help you grow as an interviewee if you pay attention to it.

Tips for Role-Plays and Mock Interviews

- Remember to greet the interviewer and thank them for the opportunity to meet.
- Sell yourself.
- Listen to the interviewer and answer all of their questions.
- Include necessary information and information that will represent you appropriately.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Be prepared to ask at least one or two questions about the job or business.
- Allow the interviewer time to speak; do not monopolize the conversation because the interviewer may have specific questions for you.
- Provide the interviewer with a resume at the beginning of the interview.
- Thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.
- Note the names of all the persons that you meet with for thank you messages and other purposes.
- Use appropriate eye contact (do not stare into their eyes; aim right above them when looking at the interviewer).
- Ask to shake the interviewer's hand at the beginning and end of the interview.
- Prepare well.

Often, successful interviewees have specific points about themselves, their training, or job experience that they want to deliver to the interviewer. Identify the points you want to make in your interviews and practice discussing them in your role-playing and mock interview exercises.

If you have to turn in documents or information to the interviewer, make sure these are in good condition (no interviewer likes crumpled pieces of paper).

Refer back to information on appropriate dress and hygiene.

It is important to note that the business world is small. Take mock interviews seriously and treat everyone professionally and respectfully. You might make a good impression on someone who can help you with your next steps or recommend you for a job. Alternatively, if you do not behave professionally or respect the mock interviewer's time and efforts on your behalf, you might damage your reputation within their network.

8-2 Sample Scoring Sheet

Mock Interview Scoring Sheet

This interview scoring sheet will help the interviewer review the interviewee's performance. The feedback should be honest and constructive to help the interviewee identify strengths and weaknesses. Rate the interviewee in the following areas using a scale of 1 to 5 (1-Needs More Improvement, 2-Needs Improvement, 3-Satisfactory, 4-Distinguished, & 5-Excellent).

1. Was the interviewee dressed appropriately?

Score: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

2. Did the interviewee act appropriately for the interview? Score: 1 2

3 4 5

Comments:

3. Did the interviewee seem prepared for the interview?

Score: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

4. Was the interviewee punctual? (Answer if appropriate)

Score: 1 2 3 4 5 Not Applicable

Comments:

5. Did the interviewee answer the questions appropriately?

Score: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

6. What do you think the interviewee did well during the interview?

Comments:

7. What do you think the interviewee could improve upon?

Comments:

8. Overall Score: Did the student interview well?

Score: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

8-3 Assignment: Obtain Feedback on Your Mock Interview

This lesson prepared you for role plays and mock interviews. Utilize the Example Scoring Sheet to get accurate feedback from the selected persons to help you practice your interviewing skills. Answer the following questions to help yourself reflect on your experiences post-role play and mock interview.

What were the positives? (What did you do well?)

What were the negatives? (What do you need to improve on?)

Module 9: Thank the Interviewer

9-1 Lesson: Paying Attention to Post-Interview Etiquette

You might think you can sit back and relax after completing your interview. However, it is time to get back to work! Write thank-you letters or emails to the people you met during your interview and those who provided leads or information on the position, business, and industry. This is why keeping information on everyone you met with and who helped you along is important.

Sending thank-you letters or emails to interviewers is a social expectation when interviewing for a job. It's also another way to stand apart from the other candidates. Thank-you notes allow you to demonstrate proper etiquette, writing skills, and follow-through. They also show that you are aware of and grateful for the time and energy people have spent helping you and considering you for a position.

Write and send these thank you letters or emails promptly (within 48 hours of the interview) and compose them professionally. The recipients are not your friends, and one of them may hold the key to you getting the job, so be formal, polite, and respectful. Send a message to each person you interacted with during your interview, including assistants and secretaries. You never know who influences the hiring process.

Here are some tips for writing thank-you letters or emails:

Write the thank-you message in a word processing program so you can use spelling and grammar checks.

Letters should be composed in formal business letter format (you may want to review the 3.7 lesson on cover letter writing).

For emails, the letters should be both attached as a document and text pasted into the body of the email. Here is an outline for guidance:

For the structure of the letter, review the lesson on cover letters.

Opening paragraph: Thank them for their time and express your appreciation for the interview.

Second paragraph: Offer a final sell of why you would be an excellent fit for the position. Keep this brief and respectful.

Closing paragraph: Thank them again and say you look forward to hearing from them shortly.

Remember to thank all of the people who assisted you in this process. This can be tedious, but this effort will pay off as you demonstrate professionalism and respect. Get started on those thank-you letters or emails!

9-2 Sample Thank-You Letters

Isabella Martin
123 Main Street #34
Lexington, KY 00000
999-444-1111
imartin@email.net

May 1, 2024

Ms. Barbara Waxman
Store Manager
John's Supermarket
123 Corporate Loop
Lexington, KY 00000

Dear Ms. Waxman:

Thank you very much for meeting with me on Tuesday to discuss the bagger position opening at your store. I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the standard of excellence you hold your employees to at John's Supermarket. I am very excited about the possibility of joining your team.

You mentioned you need a reliable employee who works well with others. My experience as captain of my high school's Speech and Debate team has helped me develop the attributes you seek in an employee. I would go the extra mile for the store and work when you need additional assistance, such as when employees are out or during peak shopping during the holidays. Having grown up in our local community, I am familiar with many of the customers who shop in your store and would contribute to providing a high level of customer service with my friendly and outgoing personality.

Again, thank you for considering me for the open position on your crew. I would love to spend my afternoons after high school and weekends working and learning in your store. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Isabella Martin

Sandra Rogers
123 Main Street APT. 5-J
Minneapolis, MN 00000
srogers@email.com
Cell: 999-999-9999

June 1, 2024

Joseph Manning
Director of Social Work
234 Hospital Road
St. Paul, MN 00000

Dear Mr. Manning:

Thank you for interviewing me for the Social Worker position in your Critical Care Unit. My years of experience in gerontology will assist me in working with patients, their families, and the unit staff.

I hope you enjoyed your camping trip over the Memorial Day weekend.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions. I look forward to hearing from you about the above position or any other positions in which you feel I may be a candidate for employment within your hospital.

Sincerely,
Sandra Rogers
LMSW.

9-3 Assignment: Draft Your Thank-You Letter

Prior to your interview, you can write a draft sample letter and keep the draft in your resource log. Then, following your interview, you will need to update the thank-you letter(s) with the name(s) and address of the person you met. A sample thank-you letter is always a good idea to help you get started.

Module 10: Following Up After an Interview

10-1 Lesson: Responding Strategically to Good and Bad News After the Interview

You have completed and sent thank-you letters, and it's time to follow up further on your interview. Following up with an employer demonstrates your eagerness to work for them and get started. Not all employers contact you to let you know their decision or where they are in the hiring process, so you must be proactive in maintaining your communications loop.

There are standards to follow when following up after an interview. Unless advised otherwise during the interview, it's typical to wait three to five days after you know the end of interviews has occurred to contact the employer. If you have been communicating primarily by email, it's acceptable to follow up via email, although businesses typically share more detailed information over the phone.

At a larger organization, contact the personnel or human resources department. At a smaller organization, you should contact the person who has been your main point of contact. Be polite and gracious when speaking to anyone at the business. If they don't have an answer for you when you call and they say they will call you back, ask for a timeframe to expect a response. If you don't hear from them within the timeframe, follow up again. It's important to appear eager and enthusiastic but not overly aggressive or demanding.

If you did not get the job, don't cry or share your emotions when you get the decision. Thank them for allowing you to interview. Remember, not everyone gets the opportunity to interview for a position, which shows they value you as an applicant and that you stood out as a potential candidate. You never know if they will have future openings that fit your qualifications, so you want to maintain a professional demeanor. State your continued interest in the company.

It's appropriate to ask if they keep applications and resumes on file for future openings.

If you get the job, try to be calm and reserved. Express your gratitude. You can ask when they would like you to start. A start date can be negotiable in some cases. If you are employed, you can tell them that you would like to give your current employer the courtesy of two weeks (or whatever your company's standard notice period is).

If the employer wants you to start sooner, you may have to leave your current position earlier than expected. Jobs can be hard to find, and most employers will understand if you explain that you tried to get them more transition time.

You do not want to burn bridges if you are leaving another job. You never know if you will work with that employer again or interact with them through your new position.

Leaving a job on good terms can provide a good reference in the future.

If you have prior commitments scheduled, such as a vacation, you will have to discuss this. Some businesses will be okay with you taking that vacation, but many will not. Sometimes, you will have to choose your job over your personal life.

Confirm your pay or wage at your new job. How many hours does this business consider full-time employment? Will they offer any benefits such as medical insurance, dental insurance, contributions to a retirement plan, etc.? If you elect to receive benefits, what kind of deduction from your pay will you have to contribute each pay cycle?

These are just a few points to consider when calling to follow up with a business you interviewed with. We suggest you practice what you will say and even make notes to ensure you cover all bases.

10-2 Sample Interview Follow-Up Plan

Sandra's Interview Follow-Up Plan

Script:

Hello, my name is Sandra Rogers. I came in to interview with Mr. Manning for the Social Worker position in the Critical Care Unit. I am checking on the status of the hiring process. Mr. Manning told me that interviews were scheduled to be completed by the 1st week in June. Do you know if a decision has been made yet?

If I got the job:

That's great! I'm thrilled.

Can you answer a few questions? Or is there someone who I can speak to about things like benefits and start date?

I'd like to give my current employer two weeks' notice, which is their standard request. Would that schedule work for you?

What benefits are available to me? When would medical coverage be available to me? Is there an orientation for new employees?

Can I confirm the (salary or hourly) rate for the position?

Is there anything I need to do before my first day, such as a background check, fingerprinting, or drug test?

If I didn't get the job:

I am disappointed, but appreciate your time and the opportunity to interview. I really do want to work for the hospital. Does the HR department hold resumes in case an appropriate opening becomes available?

Thanks again for your time.

10-3 Assignment: Draft an Interview Follow-Up Plan

Write a detailed script of what you will say after an interview. Write out what you will say and the questions you will ask if you do not get the job. Write out what you will say and the questions you will ask if you get the job.

Remember to be polite and gracious no matter the decision.

CONGRATULATIONS! You have reached the end of Course 4: Finding Employment.

Please be sure to save the assignments you have completed.

Please continue to...

Course 5: Maintaining Employment – Advancing Your Career

COURSE 5: Maintaining Employment – Advancing Your Career

[Introduction to the Job Seeker's Toolkit](#)

The Job Seeker's Toolkit aims to help you acquire essential skills necessary for successful employment. The skills and topics reviewed will help you move towards a successful job search and beyond. The Job Seeker's Toolkit, through a series of five courses, will help in building your own toolkit to assist you in preparing for the world of work.

The five courses are structured into modules and activities that build on the content and exercises of the preceding material. For this reason, we recommend working your way through the courses in chronological order and completing each assignment along the way.

The effort you put into building your own Toolkit will provide you with a foundation fundamental for success in the world of work.

The Job Seeker's Toolkit is built to accompany you through the job search and the employment lifecycle, from building self-awareness to determining the best-fit career path, identifying employment opportunities, preparing for an interview, all the way to maintaining employment and advancing your career.

Course 5: The focus of this course is to provide information on job maintenance and what it takes to be a successful employee.

This serves as the final segment of the Job Seeker's Toolkit. Alongside tips for career advancement, it offers resources to aid continual professional development in your chosen career path.

Course 5: Maintaining Employment – Advancing Your Career

Module 1: Ideas, Tips, and Resources for Success in Your New Job

Improving skills in your professional realm is a lifelong commitment. Once employed, your focus naturally shifts to excelling and maintaining your role. Additionally, you can focus on cultivating a robust professional presence. Consider working with mentors in your specific work line to support your career goals.

Check out these suggestions, pointers, and tools to keep you on the path toward success in your new job and to move forward in your career.

1-1 Researching Career Trends

Explore the insights on employment from APH CareerConnect and NSITE Connect. We have a wealth of resources on our social media and websites. Additionally, stay in the loop with professional groups and local sources related to your job. You will want to monitor trends specific to your area or line of work.

1-2 Succeeding at Your Job

Review the following APH CareerConnect content:

[Developing Positive Work Habits](#)

This blog shares work habits that help employees succeed on the job. These habits are developed and practiced through experience. If you practice these in everyday life, using them in a work setting will be easier.

[Ace Your New Job: Tips for the First Weeks of Employment](#)

This blog shares advice on transitioning into a new job. It details steps such as planning the move, adapting to the work environment, improving office accessibility, and effectively communicating needs to employers and colleagues.

[Creating an Inclusive Workplace for People Who Are Blind or Low Vision](#)

This blog emphasizes fostering workplace productivity and inclusivity for employees who are blind or have low vision and offers advice for both employees and employers. Employees are encouraged to communicate needs openly, engage actively, and build positive relationships. Meanwhile, employers are advised to provide accommodations, offer disability awareness education, and create a culture of inclusion and respect.

[Solving Problems at Work](#)

We all encounter problems on the job. This article explores common work-related issues and the strategies you can use to solve them.

Quick Success Tips

Talk about it: Connect with your professional mentors. Discuss the qualities that define a successful worker and how they contribute to career progression.

Establish and manage expectations proactively: Unrealistic expectations can pose significant challenges, whether from an employee's view of the job or an employer's perspective on their staff. Delving into this area is crucial as it often leads to misunderstandings.

Communicate with your supervisor: Communication is a two-way street. Ask for clarification when needed. Be aware of deadlines and requested tasks, and look for opportunities to assist others on your team.

Follow the company attendance policy: As soon as you know you cannot be at work, follow company procedures. This shows you are thinking of colleagues and also company scheduling needs. Be aware of breaks and mealtimes. Do not take breaks that are too long.

Demonstrate continual learning: Embrace lessons from mistakes, take professional opportunities such as presentations or articles, and record your learning endeavors.

Take advantage of professional growth: Look to teach, take, or develop training courses or opportunities.

Perform job duties and assigned tasks: Everyone is assigned tasks that are not in their job duties at some point. No task is too small or menial. Part of being a team means pitching in when circumstances require that everyone pull together. In a tighter economy, job duties multiply even more.

Manage time well: Deadlines should be met or exceeded. Time is money. Companies do not want to keep employees who fail to meet deadlines or cannot manage their time well. If a task takes too long, what changes can you make to use your time better?

Comply with the company dress code: Be conscious of clothing, style, fit, and appearance. Replace clothing that may not fit well or have a stain.

Always be prepared for change: Change is the way a company may grow. A job can change overnight.

Document achievements: Keep information regarding professional achievements in a place to access for your review. Document your published articles, presentations at conferences, webinars, or volunteer activities on behalf of your employer. Attaching a list to your performance evaluation is a good idea.

Periodically review and update your job description: Update your job description as part of your review.

Practice common courtesy: Proper social interactions with colleagues and the public are critical. All workplaces require maintaining social norms (expected behaviors) to some degree. The social norms may not be the same at every business, but it is best to be safe by being courteous, appropriately social, and professional at all times. Remember to say "hello," "goodbye," "good morning," "have a good night," "please," and "thank you." Small actions help a workplace feel friendly and establish good relations with colleagues and the public.

Module 2: Professional Development and Continuous Career Planning

2-1 Identifying Appropriate Professional Development Opportunities

Many careers require ongoing professional development. National certifying boards or state credentialing bodies may set these requirements. It is important to learn what your employer and any certifying bodies require.

Continuing education aims to help you develop a higher level of knowledge, share current research, learn new trends in a field, or understand changing regulations.

If you enjoy teaching and sharing your knowledge, you also may want to teach continuing education courses at the university or college level. This may be separate and apart from your day job. But it is a way of advancing within your field.

Taking initiative in your professional development is a way to demonstrate you can continuously hone your skills and set yourself up for advancement in your chosen field.

Employers and Professional Development:

Large employers may offer continuing education as part of employment. This might be through lunch and learn activities where they bring speakers into the job for everyone to learn as a team.

Other employers may compensate you with time off for attending professional development activities. Additionally, they may or may not pay for the registration fees for such activities. These are all things to be aware of and get answers to, allowing you to know if you will need to spend your money to maintain a certification or license.

Do you teach professional development activities at a college or university as part of your job? If your employer pays you to do so, clarifying this to your course participants will avoid any conflicts of interest.

Additionally, at some point, you will be asked if you want to take on a work responsibility that will stretch you, professionally or personally. Consider accepting the opportunity. Think about what is necessary to get the job done. Will you need support from others on your team? Is the task possible without the support? Are you able to commit the time to the project? Stretching yourself can show a supervisor that you are committed to getting a job done, are hard-working, and rise to the occasion.

2-2 Maintaining Focus on Your Career Path

Consider your career goals. Would you like to develop leadership skills? Increase your job

responsibilities? Consider how additional job responsibilities or pursuing professional development opportunities will enable you to progress on your career path.

Module 3: Resources and Professional Development Opportunities

In an earlier course, we had you develop resources specific to your career path. It is time to look back at the list of organizations previously created and update it if it has been a while.

Consider the following resources:

NSITE:	www.nsite.org
NSITE Connect:	https://nsiteconnect.jobboard.io/
NSITE Professional Development Opportunities:	https://nsite.org/training/
NSITE LinkedIn:	Follow APH, NSITE, NIB, etc.

Consumer Groups and Professional Associations:

- [American Council of the Blind \(acb.org\)](http://acb.org)
- [National Federation of the Blind \(nfb.org\)](http://nfb.org)
- [American Foundation for the Blind \(afb.org\)](http://afb.org)
- [The American Printing House for the Blind ConnectCenter](#)
- [Welcome to NIB | Careers for the Blind](#)
- [Career Resources | National Industries for the Blind \(nib.org\)](http://nib.org)
- [World Services for the Blind \(wsblind.org\)](http://wsblind.org)
- [AbilityOne](#)
- Consider career-specific consumer groups and professional associations.

Professional Publications:

- Consider career-specific professional publications.

Continuing Education and Support Resources:

- [Rehabilitation Services Administration \(RSA\) \(ed.gov\)](http://ed.gov)
- [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies](#)
- [APH ConnectCenter Transition Hub \(aphconnectcenter.org\)](http://aphconnectcenter.org)
- [American Job Centers | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](http://dol.gov)
- [Welcome to Our Webinars and Podcasts: Employment Insights with the NRTC | National Technical Assistance Center \(msstate.edu\)](http://msstate.edu)
- [For People who are Blind or have Low Vision | National Technical Assistance Center \(msstate.edu\)](http://msstate.edu)

- [JAN - Job Accommodation Network \(askjan.org\)](http://askjan.org)
- [Hadley Vision Resources | 100 Years of Empowering Adults with Vision Loss](#)
- [Employment Insights with the NRTC](#)
- [Blind Abilities Employment Podcast](#)
- [The Voice of Job Seekers](#)
- [Find your Dream Job](#)
- [Copeland Coaching](#)
- [David Lawrence Recruitment Show: Vine Resources podcast](#)
- [Eyes on Success](#)
- [Consider career-specific continuing education opportunities and resources.](#)

Financial Resources:

- [Penny Forward](#): Financial literacy for people who are blind or low vision
- [The Work Site \(ssa.gov\)](http://ssa.gov)
- [Using Your PASS - Ticket to Work - Social Security \(ssa.gov\)](#)
- [Social Security Online - The Red Book - A Guide to Work Incentives \(ssa.gov\)](#)
- [Financial Education and Incentives | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)
- [ABLE Accounts - Tax Benefit for People with Disabilities | Internal Revenue Service \(irs.gov\)](#)

Assistive Technology Resources:

- [Visual Interpreting – Get Live, On-demand Access to Visual Information \(aira.io\)](http://aira.io)
- [How to Contact Apple for Accessibility Support](#)
- [AppleVis](#)
- [Be My Eyes - See the world together](#)
- [Computers for the Blind](#)
- [Disability Answer Desk Support | Microsoft Accessibility](#)
- [HIMS Support | \(hims-support.com\)](http://hims-support.com)
- [Humanware - Home - Low Vision & Blindness Solutions](#)
- [iBug Users Group](#)
- [NVDA Access: Empowering lives through non-visual access to technology](#)
- [ViewPlus Technologies - Braille Embossers & Tactile Graphics](#)
- [Vispero Training](#)
- [Freedom Scientific Training](#) for resources on JAWS, ZoomText, and Fusion materials

Dog Guide Resources:

- [Guide Dogs for the Blind](#)
- [The Seeing Eye](#)
- [Leader Dogs for the Blind](#)
- [Guide Dogs of America](#)
- [Guide Dogs of the Desert](#)
- [Southeastern Guide Dogs](#)
- [Freedom Guide Dogs for the Blind](#)
- [Pilot Dogs](#)
- [Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation](#)
- [Guide Dogs of Texas](#)
- [OccuPaws](#)

Mainstream Career Resources:

- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Job Search - Millions of Jobs Hiring Near You | ZipRecruiter](#)
- [Search for podcasts specific to your career or field of interest.](#)
- Consider your local career center, employment one-stop center, or American Job Center.

3-2 Additional Resources: Articles/ Videos

- [Personal Employment Stories: People Who Are Blind or Low Vision Share Their Employment Stories \(APH CareerConnect\)](#)
- [Videos | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)

Here are a sampling of the *U.S. Department of Labor Videos*:

[Communication Skills](#)
[Professionalism](#)
[Apprenticeships](#)

Conclusion

Congratulations! You have completed the APH CareerConnect Job Seeker's Toolkit. We hope you have learned a lot about yourself, the types of jobs that interest you, how to obtain a job, and ways to advance in your career.

We welcome feedback via email at connectcenter@aph.org with the Job Seekers Toolkit subject line. Please let us know what you enjoyed and where there is room for improvement.