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Medical Transcription Career Starter Kit

0201703SP03C-22

Delivering on our promise

Medical Transcription

Career Starter Kit

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Section 1

Time for a Change

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the characteristics of people who successfully change careers.
2. Apply keys to success as you begin your job search.
3. Determine what it means to be your own boss during your job search.

Introduction

Welcome to your Career Starter Kit! This kit teaches you to find and create your professional place in our ever-changing world, giving you a head start in your decision to begin a new career or change careers.

Do you wonder where to begin your job search? Do you know how to write a killer resume? Are you prepared to interview? Consider this kit as your own career coach. It will give you the know-how and the confidence to advertise your skills, make a great impression on a potential employer and maximize your success!

Just as your lesson materials, this kit is full of real-world examples. You'll find that many apply directly to the career you've chosen. Others are more general or discuss other job opportunities in a variety of fields. As you read, study these examples, and use what applies to you, your work and your job hunt. Doing so will keep you on the right path!

In this first section, we'll discuss the characteristics of people who successfully change careers. You'll discover our commitment to you and your commitment to yourself during your job search, as well as apply keys to success as you begin your search. And, you'll determine what it means to be your own boss during your job search.

Now, let's get started!



Consider this kit as your own career coach.

A Few Examples

First, we'll take a look at a few examples of people preparing to start a new career. As you read, note which person is most like you. Do you have similar work experience, situations or questions? What else do you have in common?

- ➔ **Teresa** is 21 years old and has been married for about a year. Since graduating high school, she has worked part time as a sales clerk at a women's clothing store. About a year ago, Teresa decided that, while she enjoyed working with and helping customers, she wanted to do something more fulfilling than retail. The medical profession has always been of interest to her, so, in addition to working, Teresa took U.S. Career Institute's Medical Transcription Course. She just completed the course and earned her certificate as a medical transcriptionist; now, she's ready to look for an entry-level medical transcription job.
- ➔ Teresa decided that she'd like to begin her new career as a medical transcriptionist at a local clinic, and she knows of many clinics in her area that she wants to look in to. How should she begin her job search?
- ➔ For the past two years, **Kevin** has worked full time in the front office of a plasma donation facility while taking U.S. Career Institute's Medical Transcription Course. His office is heavily staffed, and Kevin's job consists mainly of general filing and reception duties.
- ➔ During the past month, he has decided that he wants to work in a position that allows him to use the knowledge that he gained through his course.
- ➔ Kevin would like to be a more integral member of the healthcare team. He's taken the first step, identifying that his ideal job would be to work as a medical transcriptionist at a busy general practitioner's office. Now, what's the next step?
- ➔ **Marta** is 35 years old and has two children—Carlos, who is one, and Marion, who is nearly three. Marta has been a stay-at-home mom for years and feels grateful that she was able to have that time with her children. However, Marta and her husband recently divorced, and Marta knows she needs to return to the workforce.
- ➔ In her 20s, Marta worked as a customer service agent for a wireless service, but she knows that she doesn't want to continue her career in that field. She'd like to find a job with flexible hours—one that might even allow her to work from home. Then, she wouldn't have to put her children in daycare.
- ➔ After doing some research and speaking with some of her friends, Marta learned about the field of medical transcription. It sounded like a perfect fit for her, so she enrolled in U.S. Career Institute's Medical Transcription Course. Though she won't complete the course for another month, what can she do now to make her job search easier once she receives her certificate?

Make a Successful Career Change

Think about the scenarios that you just read. It's likely that one reason behind your decision to take a course with U.S. Career Institute is that you're ready to make a career change—or at least a career advancement. Perhaps you're already motivated for a career change. Maybe you realize that a USCI certificate will help you advance in your current career. Perhaps you've already changed jobs or careers several times. Or, maybe you're gearing up for your first job or a return to the workforce after several years away! No matter what your starting point, no matter how limited or full your education and experience seem, you can make a successful career change.

People who successfully change careers have six things in common:

1. **They're open to new ideas and possibilities.** They don't feel that obstacles and circumstances limit them. They are optimistic and find new ways to keep moving forward, even in small steps.
2. **They ask for help and support.** They turn to people in their field of interest, school advisors and experts in the field for input and advice. They're strong enough to know it's OK to ask questions and seek guidance.
3. **They have the support of their loved ones.** They rely on encouragement and help from family and friends and go to them for laughter, to vent and to rest and recuperate.
4. **They're creative problem-solvers.** If they can't solve the problem, they know where to look to find the answer: the Internet, books, journals, seminars and other people in the industry. They realize they don't need to know all the answers; they just need to know where to *find* the answers.
5. **They're willing to take a risk.** They recognize the benefits of change, and they know there might be a short-term sacrifice to achieve their goals. (**Goals** are choices you make about what you want in your life.) Although they may feel anxious, unsure or afraid, they don't let their worries and concerns paralyze them.
6. **They've done their homework.** They have researched their new career options, and they've learned about future opportunities.

Changing a job or career gives you a chance to find greater personal and professional satisfaction. It's rewarding to know that you worked hard to identify and obtain a career that fulfills you. When you make your career change, you'll experience great joy as you do something that is valuable and rewarding to you! Now, how is this Career Starter Kit going to help you do all of that?



People who successfully change careers ask for help and support.



People who successfully change careers realize they don't need to know all the answers; they just need to know where to find the answers.

Our Commitment to You

As your coaches, our responsibilities to you are to:

1. Train you well.

You are receiving high-quality training to prepare for a new career. People with your professional skills are in demand!

2. Show you how to find potential employers.

This guide provides you with proven techniques to find and communicate with potential employers. From resumes to interviewing skills, we will teach you how to present yourself professionally.

3. Advise you during the job-search process.

We can advise you about equipment, employer relations, marketing yourself—whatever you have questions about.

4. Help you solve any problems you might have.

If you run into any problems during your job search, we'll help you determine how to solve them.

5. Provide these services to you for your entire lifetime.

You may speak with U.S. Career Institute graduate counselors at any time after you graduate. We will continue to provide guidance and advice throughout your career.



You may speak with U.S. Career Institute graduate counselors at any time after you graduate.

Your Commitment to Yourself

We will be your coaches, but you will be the one to contact businesses, write letters and go to interviews. It will be a challenging and exciting experience—and you'll be ready for it.

This kit explains exactly what steps you should take to find employment. Here's a list of your responsibilities:

1. Complete your training.

Continue to work on your lessons. Don't take any shortcuts; be sure to complete each step. Set a goal of how many hours a week you can study—and stick to it!

2. Read and follow this Career Starter Kit.

Read this kit carefully, and keep it handy for reference. It will be an important key to success.

3. Prepare promotional materials.

This kit will explain what kinds of printed materials you will need during your job search. These materials will help you introduce yourself to prospective employers.

4. Contact prospective employers.

Through networking, you will make contacts. Your efforts will enable you to find businesses that need your skills now or in the future.

5. Conduct interviews with prospective employers.

When asked to interview for a job, prepare well, and conduct an effective interview.

6. Follow up after your interview.

Whether your interview leads to a job, follow up on the interview with a thank-you letter. Prompt follow-up ensures that you are remembered favorably.

7. Provide top-quality services to your employer.

Your employer will tell his or her friends and associates about you, and you'll be well on your way to establishing your professional reputation.



This kit will explain what kinds of printed materials you will need during your job search.

Keys to Your Success

Now that you've previewed what your job search will involve, let's take a minute to discuss some keys to your success in your new career.

Your Career Starter Kit

It is important that you read and follow the directions in this Career Starter Kit. This kit presents all the steps you will need to find an employer. Our experience shows that the graduates who follow the procedures outlined here present a very professional image and locate an employer quickly. Those graduates who don't follow the procedures in the kit nearly always have difficulty finding professional employment.

Your Attitude

Another key to your success is your own attitude. Here is a simple formula that applies to virtually all aspects of our lives—and particularly to employment.

$$\text{PREPARATION} + \text{OPPORTUNITY} = \text{SUCCESS}$$

Preparation—You are achieving the first part of this formula as you study and train for your new career. You will be prepared with top-quality skills!



A key to your success is your own attitude.

Opportunity—Opportunity generally comes in two ways: (1) encountering it through chance or “luck,” or (2) creating it. With the help of this kit, you will create opportunities. Remember, just as you studied to acquire new skills through your coursework, you now need to train and prepare yourself to create opportunities to put those skills to work.

Success—This kit provides guidelines that will help you successfully put your new skills to work. The following is an article that describes attitude, an important element of success in every life.

Attitude Is The Answer

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church or a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the strength we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent of how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes. The greatest discovery of my life is that by changing my attitude, I can change my life.

—Dr. Charles Swindoll

Be Your Own Career Boss

Planning ahead and being your own career boss is key to your job search. You decide how to spend your time. You set your own goals and push yourself forward—just as you did throughout your USCI course! You seek, analyze and use the best resources available to achieve your own success. Your talents, skills and experience make you the boss of yourself.

You have the unique opportunity to run your own life like it's a business—your business. It's important to operate as if you are your own company as you search for new job opportunities and develop the ones that you already have. This means you need to market and sell yourself to people who will appreciate your value and “buy” what you have to offer.



Job-hunting experts recommend that you treat your job search as if it were your full-time job. In other words, if you don't have another job right now, work on your job search eight hours a day, five days a week.

So, how will you connect with employers who can “buy” what you have to offer? Well, you must put in the time and effort required to make your job search a success. Job-hunting experts recommend that you treat your job search as if it were your full-time job. In other words, if you don’t have another job right now, work on your job search eight hours a day, five days a week. If you do have a job, set weekly goals for accomplishing tasks related to your job search so you continue to move toward your goal of landing that *other* job you’re dreaming of.

To successfully be your own career boss, keep these ideas in mind:

- ➔ Explore possibilities and opportunities along the way.
- ➔ Explore yourself and your abilities.
- ➔ Challenge yourself. Try new things.
- ➔ Pay attention to the things that really excite you and interest you.
- ➔ Collaborate. Successful careers and professional growth will require others’ help.
- ➔ Always be open to learning.
- ➔ Watch trends in your field, industry and company.
- ➔ Know about current resources, and keep up with the new ones.
- ➔ Be flexible. Your career growth may not always be “up the ladder,” but you can and will experience career growth in other ways.



Your career growth may not always be “up the ladder,” but you can and will experience career growth in other ways.

Just as we did in your lesson books, we’ll provide exercises throughout this kit. While not required, these exercises do sum up what you’re reading and help you apply what you learn. Now, let’s complete your first exercise!

Exercise 1

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. **What factors are motivating you to start a career or make a career change?**
2. **Review the six criteria for people who are successful at changing careers. Identify the criteria that address your strengths and those that present challenges. If a strength, explain the reason; if a challenge, suggest how you might improve upon it.**
3. **Will being your own career boss be challenging for you? Why?**
4. **How can you work to be a better career boss for yourself?**

Review Exercise 1

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Summary

You're making great progress in your job hunt already! In this section, you examined the characteristics of people who successfully change careers, identifying the characteristics that represent strengths and challenges for you. Now that you're aware of the challenges you face, you can work that much harder to overcome them.

We also outlined keys to success as you begin your job search. Remember that a positive attitude is one of the most important things that you can possess! Finally, you discovered what it means to be your own boss during your job search.

As you continue with this Career Starter Kit, it might be helpful to keep in mind that you already practice much of what you learned in this first section. After all, you chose to make a career change when you began your course. And, you proved your commitment, positive attitude and willingness to be your own boss as you moved through the course!

In the next section, we'll begin to prepare for your job search as we discuss the job market, networking and informational interviewing. Let's begin!

Prepare for Your Job Search

Learning Objectives

1. Define *job market*, and research your local job market.
2. Use industry publications, career research Web sites and local agencies to help you with your career exploration.
3. Explain the four stages of job creation, and identify those that you should focus on during your job hunt.
4. Differentiate between *open job market* and *hidden job market*, and determine how to explore the hidden job market.
5. Capitalize on everyday networking opportunities.
6. Apply volunteer activities to your advantage during your career search.
7. Define *shadowing* and *informational interviewing*, and explain their value.
8. Determine appropriate people for informational interviews.
9. Prepare questions for and conduct informational interviews.
10. Evaluate your interview, and identify what you would do differently.

Introduction

This section gives you the chance to fully explore the ideas you have for a new career. Not only will you think, you'll do. You'll examine the real-world job market for your intended career. You'll research Web sites, employment agencies and organizations that can help you learn more about your career. You'll look at volunteer and internship possibilities as ways to gain skills and make contacts.

This section is a wonderful opportunity to discover the nuts and bolts of the career you've trained for and to expand your network of contacts. Let's start with a look at Robin, a successful job applicant.

Robin's career goal is to work in event planning. To help move forward in her career exploration, she let her circle of friends, family members and acquaintances know that she was taking a course in this field. Several people provided suggestions and recommendations. One suggestion was to attend a local chapter of a professional event planners' association.



Attend a local chapter of a professional association in your field.

Robin was a bit nervous about attending by herself without knowing anyone, but she found the group to be very welcoming to guests. The meeting gave her a chance to talk with several people in the field—people she wanted to speak with further.

Afterward, she followed up with these individuals and asked for a few minutes of their time to conduct informational interviews. These interviews helped Robin understand more about the field, and she discovered there were many aspects to event planning. Each person she talked to pointed her toward more people. As she talked to lots of people, she learned about the role of event planners in different situations.

Robin took the informational interviewing one step further and decided to shadow a couple of people for a day. These were people she'd met at the association meeting. During her shadowing session, she got to see firsthand what it was like to be an event planner.

As a result, Robin decided to focus on weddings. She also found a volunteer opportunity with a nonprofit organization where she could update her office and technology skills. She read the professional publications for event planners and learned of ways to improve her chances for employment while she worked through her course.

While volunteering, she continued to stay in touch with many of the people she'd met through the association and attended the local chapter meetings.

After attaining the business skills she needed and completing her course, Robin launched her job search. Since she already had relationships in place with people in the field, it didn't take long for her to find several opportunities that she was qualified for.

Robin knew her strengths, knew her field and interviewed well. In no time at all, she accepted an offer with a wedding planner in the area. She was highly successful because she developed professional relationships during her career exploration and learned new skills to bridge her gaps in knowledge.

Some of this scenario probably sounded pretty familiar to you. After all, you decided to start a career. You likely told friends and family of your intentions, listened to their suggestions and did some research on your chosen field. You took a course and are now ready to find a job.

This section will help you be as successful as Robin because you're going to learn how to do what she did—tap into the hidden job market and conduct informational interviews. Let's get started!

Know Your Job Market

What would you do if you were looking for a new or used car? You might identify your needs, such as vehicle size, mileage and cost. Then, you might research the various makes and models to see which ones best fit your needs. Lastly, you might research the cars available in your region. After all, some varieties might be so popular they'd be in short supply in your area, while others might be flooding the local market.



What would you do if you were looking for a new or used vehicle?

It's even more important to take this type of methodical approach when you look for a new job or career. You need to thoroughly research your regional job market to understand which careers are in demand and which ones are hard to come by. The **job market** refers to all open positions that employers need to fill. The job market is a good reflection of the health of an economy—is it growing and expanding, staying the same or contracting?

Your Local Job Market



With the growing use of technology and the Internet, the newspaper's classified ads are certainly not the only way to gauge the availability of jobs and the condition of your job market.

With the growing use of technology and the Internet, the newspaper's classified ads are certainly not the only way to gauge the availability of jobs and the condition of your job market.

Advertising in newspapers can be costly for smaller employers, and many will use various job posting Web sites or simply post openings on their own company Web sites.

With so many jobs posted online, national job search engines, such as www.indeed.com, can be very useful to you. Simply enter the name of your town or city, and see what the search returns. The site will comb all the job posting and employer Web sites, such as www.monster.com or www.dice.com. How many jobs are open in your area? What is the local job market like?

Your local **Chamber of Commerce** is an agency that can provide statistical information about employment in your area. Your local Chamber of Commerce, economic development agency or workforce center should also be able to provide you with job market data. This data was compiled from economic research regularly gathered in various regions of the country, probably including your region! Often, these agencies can provide you with reports of industries in your area and the percentage of growth in them.

Explore Your Chosen Career and the Career Market

So, you think you know the job market and the jobs in your area? Well, now it's time to get down in the trenches for some real-world investigation. Let's examine some useful career exploration tools and see which ones work best for you. With these tools, you can reaffirm that you do have the skills necessary to work in your chosen field, as well as take a look at some of the jobs available in your field.



Let's examine some useful career exploration tools and see which ones work best for you.

Industry Publications and Web Sites

Almost every industry, field or career has a professional association that produces an industry publication. Track down the association(s) for your field of interest, and conduct online research about the requirements and direction of this field. See if each association has a local chapter, and request to visit as a guest. Attending a chapter meeting is a great way to meet local professionals who are active in this field! You might even request informational interviews with a few members or club leaders.

Yes, there are a number of professional organizations for medical transcriptionists.

- ➔ **National Healthcareer Association (NHA)**—Founded in 1989, the NHA now lists itself as the largest allied healthcare certification agency in the United States. The NHA offers members information about job openings and industry trends. It also publishes an online magazine, *Health Career Connect* at www.hccmag.com, that presents articles about work in the field of healthcare.

NHA
7 Ridgedale Avenue, Suite 203
Cedar Knolls, New Jersey 07927
(800) 499-9092
www.nhanow.com

- ➔ **Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity (AHDI)**—The AHDI was founded in 1978. It offers a Registered Medical Transcriptionist (RMT) exam and a Certified Medical Transcriptionist (CMT) exam. It also publishes *Vitals*, which is a weekly newsletter to keep members up-to-date on the trends and challenges of medical transcription. The AHDI also publishes the widely used *The Book of Style for Medical Transcription*.

AHDI
4230 Kiernan Avenue, Suite 130
Modesto, California 95356
(800) 982-2182
www.ahdionline.org

- ➔ **Medical Transcription Industry Association (MTIA)**—The MTIA became an official organization in 1993. The MTIA is a nonprofit membership association serving the needs of medical transcription companies and health information management professionals. Representatives from approximately 100 small to large transcription companies originally established the MTIA membership. MTIA general member companies employ more than 7,000 medical transcriptionists in various settings. One of MTIA’s primary goals is to help members develop business skills and stay abreast of technology. There are several kinds of MTIA memberships, including General, Associate, Affiliate, Supporting, Corporate and Vendor.

MTIA
4230 Kiernan Avenue, Suite 130
Modesto, California 95356
(800) 543-MTIA (6842)
<http://www.mtia.com/>

- ➔ **American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)**—AHIMA (founded in 1928) is one of the largest professional healthcare associations, representing health information management professionals who work throughout the healthcare industry. In AHIMA, health information management professionals serve the healthcare industry and the public as they manage, analyze and utilize data vital for patient care and make that data accessible to healthcare providers. AHIMA publishes a monthly professional journal, the *Journal of AHIMA*, that includes a broad range of research-based healthcare articles on topics, such as professional standards, technology, career opportunities, education and credentialing.

AHIMA
233 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 2150
Chicago, IL 60601-5800
(312) 233-1100
www.ahima.org

Two additional professional resources for medical transcriptionists are: *Advance For Health Information Professionals*, a publication that discusses trends and issues that relate to you professionally; and *e-Perspectives on The Medical Transcription Profession*, a free, online periodical that the Health Professions Institute publishes. For more information, contact the following companies:

Advance For Health Information Professionals
2900 Horizon Drive
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(800) 355-5627
www.advanceweb.com

Health Professions Institute
P.O. Box 801
Modesto, CA 95353
(209) 551-2112
www.hpisum.com

As a member of a professional medical transcription organization, and by regularly reading professional journals and articles in your field, you can find out:

- ➔ What kinds of technological changes are occurring in the healthcare field in general, and medical transcription in particular.
- ➔ How other transcriptionists are adapting their practices to accommodate these changes.
- ➔ If and how policies, procedures and laws are changing in light of new technologies.

Contact one or more of these organizations directly for information about specific questions you have or support you need in your own transcription work. You can also provide input and become a part of the efforts to develop and revise policies, procedures and laws that affect the medical transcription profession.

One question that new graduates often ask is, “Am I now a CMT?” *CMT* stands for *Certified Medical Transcriptionist*. You can become a CMT if you pass an exam that the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity (AHDI) gives.

Most U.S. Career Institute medical transcription graduates find employment without obtaining the CMT credential. However, becoming a CMT is a worthwhile professional goal. It is something you may choose to pursue now or in the future.

As you know, the AHDI offers both a CMT and an RMT exam. The CMT exam tests your knowledge of anatomy and physiology, as well as medical terminology. It also tests your transcription abilities. The AHDI requires that applicants have two years of acute-care transcription experience prior to taking this exam.

New graduates who do not qualify for the AHDI CMT exam may take the RMT exam. This exam is appropriate for (a) recent graduates of medical transcription programs and (b) medical transcriptionists with less than two years’ experience in acute-care report preparation. Similar to the CMT exam, the RMT exam includes an academic and a practical portion. For more information, contact the AHDI.

Sometimes, industry publications and their Web sites post job openings. Keep an eye on these publications and Web sites; this can help you learn more about who’s hiring, what types of jobs are open, geographical areas that are in need and average salaries.

Local Agencies

What business organizations and employment offices operate in your community? Look in the phone directory, or do an Internet search to find out if any of the following agencies can help you in your job search.

Chamber of Commerce

As you know, your local Chamber of Commerce can provide statistical information about employment in your area. To find a Chamber of Commerce in your area, use the search function at the U.S. Chamber Web site: <http://www.uschamber.com/chambers/directory>.

Economic Development Agency

Some towns and cities have an agency that focuses on recruiting employers and new businesses to develop the region's economy. This agency often tracks data on employment-related issues, as well.

Workforce Center

The federal government created centers across the United States to support job seekers and employers. Your state or local government operates these workforce centers. These centers can provide you with regional-specific data on unemployment rates, growing occupations and in-demand industries. Go to the following career Web site, and click "Service Locator" to find a workforce center near you: www.careeronestop.org.



Some towns and cities have an agency that focuses on recruiting employers and new businesses to develop the region's economy.

Online Labor Market Tools

If you want to do additional job market research, you can continue your exploration with these online tools.

O*Net Online

Web site: www.online.onetcenter.org

O*Net Online can tell you if the career you are interested in is growing and if there is a demand in your state. Data is not available for every state and every occupation.

America's Career InfoNet

Web site: www.acinet.org

Career InfoNet lets you get a wide variety of comprehensive reports on various industries, occupations and states. You can get profiles of industries and occupations, as well as find out which industries and occupations are growing or which are declining in your state.

Occupational Outlook Handbook

Web site: www.bls.gov/oco

For hundreds of jobs, the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) provides you with valuable information about necessary training and education, earnings, expected job prospects, what workers do on the job and working conditions. Check out the information provided for your chosen career!

For example, the outlook for medical transcriptionists is good according to the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Employment for medical transcriptionists is projected to grow by 11 percent from 2008 to 2018, which is as fast as the national average. Demand for transcriptions will increase with our growing and aging population as the elderly receive more medical treatments, and those treatments need to be documented.

Many medical transcriptionists telecommute from home-based offices, and some work at healthcare facilities. About 36 percent of medical transcriptionists will work for hospitals, and about 23 percent will work for physicians' offices. Medical transcriptionists listen to dictated recordings that physicians and other healthcare professionals make and transcribe them into medical reports, correspondence and other administrative material. They produce discharge summaries, medical history and physical examination reports, operative reports, consultation reports, autopsy reports, diagnostic-imaging studies, progress notes and letters. Medical transcriptionists return transcribed documents to physicians or other healthcare professionals for review and signature or correction. These documents eventually become part of patients' permanent files.

There is no licensing requirement for medical transcriptionists. However, most employers prefer to hire those who have taken some type of formal medical transcription program, who have experience or who are certified.

Medical transcriptionists' earnings vary depending on experience, skill level and location. Median annual earnings of wage-and-salary medical transcriptionists were \$32,052 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$27,082 and \$38,584.

As you can see, the medical transcriptionist career offers a very promising and positive outlook!

The Riley Guide

Web site: www.rileyguide.com

The Riley Guide is a comprehensive Web site of career resources. The listings for career research are vast, and you could spend hours exploring every site!



The Riley Guide is a comprehensive Web site of career resources.

Navigate the Job Market

You've completed your research on the career or occupation you're interested in. Now, it's time to actively pursue that type of work and engage in a job search. But before you rush out and start looking for a job, it's important to understand how a job becomes available and what you can expect during the job creation process. Armed with this understanding, you will be far more productive when it comes to making decisions about how to use your time and what to focus on when looking for a job.

Job Creation

Let's start with a look at how a job gets created. You'll realize there are more effective ways to find job openings than waiting until they hit the local newspaper once you're aware of the four stages of job creation.

Try to focus your attention on the first three stages.



It's far easier for an employer to refer to resumes on file and contact someone she's spoken with before than it is to post an ad and accept resumes from total strangers.

Stage 1: At this stage, a company's personnel needs are met. There are no openings for additional employees. This is still a good time to talk to people at the company to learn more about its culture and its hiring practices. Of course, the answer will probably be "no" if you do talk to someone during this stage and ask if the company is hiring. However, this does *not* mean you can't submit your resume or application.

Someday, that company will have a need, and it will refer to its file of resumes. It's far easier for an employer to refer to resumes on file and contact someone she's spoken with before than it is to post an ad and accept resumes from total strangers.

Stage 2: At this stage, a formal opening does not yet exist, but insiders know a job will soon be available. Perhaps an employee is moving out of state, taking a job elsewhere or retiring. This will create a job opening in the future. Information about "possible" openings is usually shared in an informal way—"water cooler talk." During your daily interactions with people, ask them questions about upcoming staff changes. Do they anticipate any? What is the employer's process for posting the positions? Even though the job opening isn't official, it's a great time to submit your application or resume.

Stage 3: During this phase, Human Resources makes the opening official. The company still hasn't advertised the opening, but it has communicated information about the opening internally, announcing it to company employees. If you learn of a position at this stage, submit your resume or application as soon as possible to beat the hundreds or thousands of people who will soon be aware of the opening.

Stage 4: At this stage, it's official—the position is finally advertised on the company Web site, job posting site or in a newspaper. Guess what? You are now competing with everyone else who can read the ad. This doesn't mean you should give up—not at all. It does mean that you have to work extra hard to stand out from the crowd and hope to catch the attention of the hiring manager. It also means that you must be persistent in following up and asking for an interview.

As you can see, it's a good idea to target employers during stages 1 through 3 if possible. This way, you can find job opportunities *before* they're advertised. During those early stages, there is little or no pressure on you. If you wait until stage 4, you have a lot more competition to deal with!

During stages 1 to 3, you may be able to get a referral from an employee who's aware of an upcoming opening. You really catch the attention of Human Resources and hiring managers when you're referred to an employer for a position and have the endorsement of an employee. Why? Because the company trusts the opinions of its employees and would rather hire someone who is a known quantity than someone who is a wild card. It's safe to say that employers dislike searching for new employees as much as job seekers dislike searching for new jobs. Employers would much rather hire someone they've had previous contact with or someone who was referred to them.



During stages 1 to 3, you may be able to get a referral from an employee who's aware of an upcoming opening.

Time to Search

The amount of time it takes to secure employment depends on many factors. Keep in mind that some of these factors are completely *out* of your control. The economy of the region that you live in, the market for your career and the number of job seekers affect your search. Sometimes, the lucky break is just being in the right place at the right time!

A host of other factors can affect your job-search results. The factors that follow are entirely *within* your control. They relate to your behavior and outlook. You can decrease your job search time if you make these factors work for you.

- ➔ **Dedicate time to the process.** If you can only dedicate a couple hours a week to your job search, expect the process to take longer than it does for someone who can dedicate six hours a day. Be realistic about the amount of time you can dedicate to your job search. If you only have a few hours a week, engage in activities that are highly productive. For example, follow the steps outlined in this kit. Keep notes, and stay organized so you always know your next and most effective job-search activity.

- ➔ **Pay attention to presentation.** While looking for a job, make an investment in dressing neatly and presenting yourself well. You control your appearance, your voice and your level of confidence. Most of us can't afford a new wardrobe and voice lessons, but we can afford to be well groomed and hygienic. You can also ask yourself questions that an employer might ask, and answer them until you feel comfortable and confident.
- ➔ **Persist and persevere.** Do you give up after the first rejection letter? Do you make follow up calls? Keep track of your contacts and your progress. If you don't call or e-mail, you'll never know if conditions have changed and someone you talked to a month ago has a position available today.
- ➔ **Take risks.** Are you willing to talk to people you don't know and ask for job leads from your friends? Nothing ventured, nothing gained!
- ➔ **Deal with rejection.** How resilient are you? No one likes rejection. Unfortunately, it comes with the territory. During a job search, think of every "no" as one step closer to a "yes"—or, as some like to say, "no" just means "no, for now...not forever."
- ➔ **Maintain a positive attitude.** Are you a glass-half-empty or a glass-half-full kind of person? A positive attitude is essential during a job search. If things get tough, just remind yourself, "Regardless of appearances, the truth is ..." and substitute the truth you want. For example, after numerous interviews you might feel frustrated, so remind yourself: "Regardless of appearances, the truth is I am closer to meeting the perfect employer who wants to hire me." This statement helps acknowledge your concern but reminds you of your goal. Remember, you are the only one who controls your attitude!
- ➔ **Be flexible.** If you hold flexible expectations of wages, location, hours and job title, you'll probably find employment more quickly. Some job seekers shoot themselves in the foot because they hold certain expectations so tightly that they miss beneficial opportunities.
- ➔ **Create professional resumes and cover letters.** You control your resumes and cover letters. Do they contain grammatical or formatting errors? Is each one unique and specific to the job you are applying for? Do the letters really convey who you are and spark the interest of the reader? This kit will discuss resumes and cover letters in detail.
- ➔ **Interact positively with everyone every day.** Treat everyone you meet with respect. You never know when you're going to meet the person who could lead you to your next great job!



While looking for a job, make an investment in dressing neatly and presenting yourself well.

As you can see, aspects of your job search that relate to your behavior and attitude are within your control. If you consistently take action (research job opportunities, make phone calls and polish your resume), you make yourself a more competitive job applicant.

And, as you research job opportunities, keep in mind the power of the hidden job market.



Some job seekers shoot themselves in the foot because they hold certain expectations so tightly that they miss beneficial opportunities.

The Hidden Job Market



Think of the job market as an iceberg in the ocean. Only a fraction of the iceberg is easy to see.

Think of the job market as an iceberg in the ocean. The visible part of the iceberg represents the **open job market**. Anyone on the ocean can see this part of the iceberg, just like anyone in the job market can see open, publicly advertised job listings. However, we know that the portion of the iceberg above the ocean surface is just the “tip of the iceberg”—the majority of the iceberg mass lies beneath the surface. And, that’s exactly the case for the **hidden job market**, which contains jobs that are not yet public knowledge. Eighty percent of job opportunities lie hidden; only 20 percent of opportunities are visible to the public!

To gain access to the hidden job market, you need to use different job-search strategies than you’d use for publicly advertised listings. Many publicly listed job openings are filled in traditional ways. For example, an applicant who sees a job posted in a classified ad submits a resume to gain the attention of the employer. In the hidden job market, jobs are often filled in a very different manner. An applicant gains the attention of the employer not through a resume but through a contact.

A **contact** is someone who knows about a “hidden” opportunity. He tells other people, and those people pass the word along to others. In the end, the job goes to “someone who knows someone.” Communication about job openings that is passed in private from one person to another is called networking. A **network** typically includes people you know directly, as well as people that they know—and the people they know.

Let’s take a closer look at how networking works in the hidden job market.

Jack works at a multi-store retailer of office equipment. The store needs an accounting services professional at Jack’s location. Before the job hits the classified ads, Jack shares the opportunity with his wife, Gena. Gena belongs to a women’s book group that meets on a regular basis. One of the members, Sandy, tells the group she’s looking for a new job where she can use her accounting experience. This prompts Gena to tell Sandy about the opportunity at Jack’s store. Shortly thereafter, Sandy has an interview.



A network typically includes people you know directly, as well as people that they know—and the people they know.

This is a great example of networking and finding opportunities in the hidden job market. Sandy would never have known about this job opportunity:

- ➔ If she didn't attend the book group that night. She was in the right place at the right time—something you can't really plan. Sometimes it's just pure coincidence or "serendipity."
- ➔ If she didn't express her needs.
- ➔ If Gena didn't attend the book group that night.
- ➔ If Jack never told Gena about the opportunity.

As you can see, there are a lot of "ifs" in the hidden job market—"ifs" you need to explore as you get out and talk to people.

Explore Beneath the Surface

Many employers never publish job openings because they prefer to hire someone they know personally or someone who's been referred to them. For some employers, networking is their sole means of meeting staff needs.



If you see something that's a good fit for you in the classified ads, respond!

Since most job opportunities lie beneath the surface, you should spend most of your time during a job search uncovering and discovering these hidden opportunities. This doesn't mean that you can't respond to classified ads in the open market. If you see something that's a good fit for you, respond!

However, stretch yourself, too. Dive beneath the surface, and spend the majority of your time focusing on employers in stages 1 through 3 of job creation. This means you should target employers who need your skills and qualifications, regardless of whether they have current job openings.

Now, how can you uncover job opportunities hidden below the surface? Talk to people from companies you're interested in, and look for potential opportunities like the seven that follow:

- ➔ Positions still in the planning stages.
- ➔ Positions that will result from impending company or staff re-organizations.
- ➔ Positions that will result from new and unannounced corporate plans (mergers, buyouts, relocations, expansion of business).
- ➔ Jobs that will open due to upcoming retirements, resignations or staff expansions.



How can you uncover job opportunities hidden below the surface?

- ➔ Jobs that will soon be advertised.
- ➔ Jobs that weren't filled, so the hiring companies pulled the postings.
- ➔ A position that you and an employer co-create based on needs that the employer has and what you have to offer.

If you continually network, you'll learn about job opportunities before they hit the newspapers or the Web. Good networking requires an exchange of information with people you already know and people you meet.

Network

It's clear that networking is a key activity during your job search. The nice thing about networking is it can happen in your everyday life. Network while you talk to other parents at your child's soccer game. Attend a professional or trade association meeting, or volunteer for a community activity. Strike up a conversation with your neighbors or people you come into contact with throughout the day, like at the doctor's office, the grocery store or the bank. Talk to business associates, colleagues and vendors who visit your current workplace.

Following is more detailed information about networking opportunities.

Professional Organizations

Professional organizations cater to a particular occupation. They usually charge a membership fee. Typically, they hold meetings, conferences and networking events, send out professional publications and inform their members of job openings. Some organizations have online communities in which members discuss their work, their companies and job opportunities.

Even if you don't attend events that a professional organization sponsors, the publications and job postings made available to members are usually worth the membership fee. Joining a professional organization may also help if you are not yet in a particular occupation but are seriously considering entering it. The table that follows provides examples of professional organizations.



Professional organizations cater to a particular occupation.

Example Professional Organizations	
Organization	Members
Society of Technical Communication (STC) www.stc.org	Anyone involved in making technical information available to those who need it: technical writers and editors, content developers, documentation specialists, technical illustrators, instructional designers, academics, information architects, usability and human factors professionals, visual designers, Web designers, developers and translators.
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) http://www.hfes.org	Anyone who's interested in designing systems and equipment that are safe, effective and intuitive for people to use: psychologists, engineers, designers, scientists and human factors engineer.
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) http://www.scbwi.org/	People who write, illustrate or share a vital interest in children's literature: published and unpublished authors and illustrators and those just getting started as writers or illustrators.

And, remember that we already discussed a few professional associations that pertain to your career, as well. To discover more professional organizations, you can visit the library or peruse the Internet.

Civic Organizations

Civic organizations are member-based associations or clubs that provide community services on a volunteer basis. These clubs often hold meetings regularly. Even if you're not a member, you may have a friend, family member or colleague who is a member and would be happy to invite you to a meeting. At these meetings, you have an opportunity to meet other members who could share valuable job-lead information with you.

Of course, it's not realistic to go to one meeting and expect to find the perfect job lead. Building rapport with people is key during your job search, and it doesn't happen overnight. You probably have to attend meetings like this several times to get to know people, see how the meetings operate and understand when it's appropriate to network. Ultimately, it can be very beneficial to your longer-term career success to be a member of a civic organization. You'll have a network of people (the membership of the club) to tap into whenever you need support down the road.

The following table shows some examples of civic organizations.

Example Civic Organizations	
Organization	Web site
Kiwanis	www.kiwanis.org
Rotary International	www.rotary.org
Lions	http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/index.shtml
Sertoma	www.sertoma.org
Soroptimist International	www.soroptimist.org

Check an online directory for your community to search for civic organizations, or go to the Web sites we noted here to see if there is a chapter in your area.

Networking Organizations

Networking organizations for small business owners probably exist in your community. These organizations provide an opportunity for business owners to gather and exchange valuable information that could result in business leads for their companies. These networking groups might be part of your local Chamber of Commerce or independently operated. It may be hard to find the independent ones in your phone book, so be prepared to talk to people you know to discover these organizations.

Sometimes, the networking groups are industry-specific. Businesses in a certain industry come together on a regular basis to share information and support each other. For example, a local commercial-contracting group might have members who work in real estate, plumbing, facility maintenance and business development.

Industry-specific networking meetings provide a fantastic opportunity to learn from people who work in that industry. Attending such meetings could help you find subjects for informational interviews. (We'll discuss informational interviews in more detail later in this kit.) And, when the time is right, you may be able to tap your meeting contacts for job leads.

Networking meetings are typically held during lunch or after work. They often include refreshments and a speaker presentation. Attend on your own, or find someone who is already a member with whom to tag along. The following table outlines examples of networking organizations.

Example Networking Organizations	
Organization	Web site
EWomen	Ewomennetwork.com
Business Networking Inc. (BNI)	www.bni.com

For networking groups in your community, check your local phone book, or inquire at your local Chamber of Commerce.

Job Search Support Groups

Job search support groups provide many benefits when you're in career transition and need to network. The groups are a place to share job leads and network with others. They typically provide a safe, friendly environment where you can meet people with experience in diverse fields, learn more about these careers, share job leads and network with others. Many people find it easier to start their networking in a job search support group because they interact with others who are in the same boat—unemployed or in transition.



Many people find it easier to start their networking in a job search support group because they interact with others who are in the same boat.

The groups often invite speakers from the community to share relevant information about job search techniques, the local job market and resources to help the members.

For job search support groups in your area, check with career counselors in your community or your local Workforce Center.

Social Gatherings

Why not tap into social functions you already have on your calendar to do a little networking? You can discuss your career transition with people you know and maybe even with some new people you meet. Social functions where you can network include neighborhood BBQs, family gatherings, church functions, kids' birthday parties and outside-of-work functions for your or your spouse's job.

Of course, in social situations, it's probably more appropriate to briefly introduce yourself and give a short overview of your situation. You can always ask to meet in a one-on-one setting at another time to further discuss your goals.

Charity and Nonprofit Organizations

Is there a charity organization that tugs your heartstrings? During a time of career transition, get involved with an organization that aligns with your values. It's a great way to meet people and stay active in the community.

To discover these organizations, check your local phone book or online directory for a list of the nonprofits in your community. If you live in a large metropolitan area, you may be able to find an association for nonprofits. Such an association typically has a Web site that includes a calendar of events for various nonprofit groups, job postings for nonprofits and resources for nonprofit professionals.

Fitness Club and Recreation Centers

Here's a location for networking that you probably haven't considered. If you belong to a fitness club or gym, you may attend classes on a regular basis and know other people who attend. During a gym workout or a painting, writing or yoga class at the community center, you may find an opportunity to talk to people and conduct a little career research.

When you're doing something you enjoy, like a recreational activity, you're typically more positive, relaxed and confident—the perfect combination to talk about yourself and your job search!



The gym is a location for networking that you probably haven't considered.

Business Functions

Check your local newspaper's business section for a calendar of business-related events. You might find that the Chamber of Commerce is hosting a function that's relevant to you and your career exploration goals. Or perhaps an organization in town is sponsoring a business speaker or seminar. Maybe a new business that interests you has moved into town and is holding an Open House for the community.

As you can see, there are plenty of networking opportunities available. Now that you know where to look, let's complete an exercise to reinforce what you've read.

Exercise 2

In this exercise, you'll talk to people about their own job searches to try to tap the hidden job market. Write the answers on a separate piece of paper.

- 1. Interview three people, and ask them about their job search. How long did it take them to get their job? What techniques did they use to succeed at securing employment?**
- 2. Interview three employed people, and ask them about their employer's current staffing/hiring needs. Develop a few questions to see if there are any opportunities that may be considered the "hidden job market," and list those opportunities. Note: Refer to the seven situations for potential opportunities, and formulate questions from those seven points. (Let the people whom you interview know that you are doing this as an assignment to collect information, and you are not hitting them up for a job!)**

Review Exercise 2

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Get Hands-on Experience

Networking expands your contacts, gets you leads and brings you closer to your job. However, you may want to get some hands-on experience in your field *before* you get your job. Here are some ways you can get hands-on experience, learn new skills and make connections in your field of interest. Sometimes, these opportunities can lead to employment.



Volunteering provides numerous benefits for a job seeker.

Volunteer Activities

Volunteering provides many benefits. It helps you acquire new skills, sharpen current skills and learn about your career field while you contribute to your community. It also lets you expand your network.

What Is 211?

When it comes to volunteering, 211 is an easy-to-remember phone number (like 411 or 911) that connects you to an agency that provides referrals for community services and volunteer opportunities. Currently, 211 is available in 30 states and continues to expand to the other states. It is funded primarily through the United Way and government agencies. Contact 211 for a list of services and volunteer opportunities in the following areas:

- ➔ **Basic human needs**—This includes food banks, clothing, shelters, rent assistance and utility assistance.
- ➔ **Physical and mental health resources**—This includes medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation, health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health and children's health insurance programs.
- ➔ **Employment support**—This includes unemployment benefits, financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance and education programs.
- ➔ **Support for older Americans and persons with disabilities**—This includes home health care, adult day care, community meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, transportation and homemaker services.
- ➔ **Support for children, youth and families**—This includes Quality Childcare, Success by 6, after school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring and protective services.
- ➔ **Volunteer opportunities and donations**—Many 211 local agencies have a database of short-term and long-term projects that need community members' assistance, as well as donations.

Let's look at someone who's volunteering as part of her career exploration and job search.

Sue's been out of the work force for years to care for her elderly mother. Her mother passed away several months ago, and Sue wants to return to the working world in her occupation as an office manager. However, she knows her office technology skills are outdated. She checked with the local 211 agency and learned of a nonprofit business that needs office help. She's arranged to volunteer there several hours a week so that she can improve her computer and office technology skills. She also knows that her volunteer work will give her a chance to interact with many types of community members—it's the perfect place to network and meet new people.

As Sue volunteers, she develops a good relationship with her supervisor. In fact, her supervisor is very supportive of Sue's job search and offers to act as a reference when she applies for a job.

Because Sue is a volunteer, there is no risk that she'll lose her position while she searches for a permanent job.



Volunteer opportunities might include home health care, adult day care, community meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, transportation and homemaker services.

Sue volunteered to fine-tune her marketable skills. You might want to volunteer to gain experience in a certain field. It's valuable to try out the work you think you want to do to see if you like it. After all, you may find that the career you're pursuing is not a great fit for you!



Volunteer work gives you a chance to interact with many types of community members.

Volunteering also expands your network and lets you meet new people. Even if the volunteering project you participate in has nothing to do with a future career direction, you're exposed to a new working environment, new people, new skills and a new organization. You'll gain awareness of what other people do in their jobs.

The people you meet as you volunteer could be key people who point you to future job opportunities. When you develop a professional rapport with people, you'll feel more comfortable setting up an informational interview in the future.

Regardless of the scope of the volunteer work you provide, make sure to add your volunteer experience to your resume. Employers like to see your involvement in the community, especially when you're unemployed or in transition.

Internship

An **internship** is typically a short-term or long-term project that gives a rookie the opportunity to gain on-the-job experience, possibly in return for a small stipend. You don't have to be in school to take on an internship, though many schools recommend internships as a way for students to apply their school-learned skills in the real world.

An internship, like volunteering, is a chance to learn more about a certain job, field or employer. You'll meet new people, and learn new skills on the job. Often, the internship can lead to a part-time or full-time job opportunity.

Some job posting Web sites allow you to search for internship opportunities. You can also check with the professional association in your industry to find out if it's familiar with employers who offer internships.



Some job posting Web sites allow you to search for internship opportunities.

And, you can always ask employers in your community if they provide opportunities for interns. If they don't, maybe you can suggest an internship and create an opportunity for yourself!

Temporary Agencies

Staffing companies like Kelly Services, Adecco and Volt Technical provide temporary staff for employers. They recruit, interview and select employees for their clients. If you're hired, the staffing company is technically your employer—it provides you with a paycheck and benefits.

Positions through temporary agencies are often short-term (anywhere from a few weeks to six months). Many times, these temporary jobs turn into something more permanent if the hiring employer decides to bring you on as an employee.

As a job seeker, temporary positions are a great way to check out the working environment of potential employers and use your skills in new ways. Temporary positions also let you shop around a bit before you decide which direction you want to go and for whom you want to work.

Shadowing and Informational Interviewing

You've researched and researched and researched, but when it comes to in-person career research and networking, shadowing and informational interviewing are the best ways to gather real-life information. Why? Because you talk to and observe people who do the type of work that you think you want to do. Both methods let you learn about your preferred career—is it really for you? And, they let others



You don't have to be in school to take on an internship, though many schools recommend internships as a way for students to apply their school-learned skills in the real world.

learn about you. Who knows? Maybe down the road, someone whom you met in an informational interview will need to hire someone, and he'll think of you!

Shadowing

Shadowing refers to following an individual at his place of employment while he performs his daily work. As the shadower, you observe the individual as he fulfills job responsibilities and completes job duties. Shadowing is a valuable career exploration technique because it lets you experience firsthand what a certain job is like.

Here is a typical procedure to arrange a professional shadowing session.

First, identify someone who has a job that you'd like to learn more about. Then, contact that person directly, and ask if you can spend time with her at her job and shadow her—make sure the person understands that you'll just tag along as a silent observer and will not get in the way of the job. Your initiative will probably impress the person, and she'll say yes, although she may need to get management approval.

If you're not sure whom to contact, consider the Human Resources Department. Some larger companies offer shadowing through their Human Resources Department as a way to recruit new employees and educate interested job seekers in a new career field. Even if a company or office doesn't formally offer a shadowing program, feel free to ask a Human Resources representative if you can arrange for an opportunity. The representative will probably be impressed that you're so serious about the career development process!



Remember, when you shadow someone, you're just like a detective tailing a suspect—so try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Next, determine how long to shadow. The time depends on your availability, as well as your "target's." An hour or two is probably the least amount of time you'll want to spend, and all day is the most. Once you have permission to shadow, arrive early, and introduce yourself. Remember, when you shadow someone, you're just like a detective tailing a suspect—so try to be as unobtrusive as possible. However, there's nothing wrong with asking questions now and then or writing them down to ask later.

Some common questions to consider asking are:

- ➔ How did you get started in your career?
- ➔ If you were starting out again, what would you do differently?
- ➔ What kind of background is recommended for an entry-level position in this field?



Shadowing and informational interviewing are the best ways to gather real-life information.

- ➔ What types of skills, aptitudes or personality traits are needed for success in this type of work?
- ➔ What is your education, and what have you learned on the job since completing your formal education?
- ➔ What is a typical day or week like for you? What are your responsibilities?
- ➔ What do you like best about the job?
- ➔ What are some of the things you dislike about this occupation?
- ➔ What tasks do you perform in this occupation?
- ➔ Where can a person interested in this occupation find more information?
- ➔ What is the best advice you can give a person interested in this occupation?
- ➔ How would you advise someone to start and build a career in your field? Where would he start? What steps should he take? What experience should he acquire?
- ➔ What is your opinion of how this field/job may grow in the future?

If shadowing seems a bit too daunting to you, how about informational interviewing? It's one of the most useful items in your career exploration toolkit.



If shadowing seems a bit too daunting to you, how about informational interviewing?

Informational Interviewing

You already learned a bit about informational interviewing. Now, you're going to put what you know into practice. **Informational interviewing** is a conversation that you initiate with a person in an occupation or career of interest to learn firsthand what the occupation is really like.

Informational interviewing can be particularly helpful if you feel unable to decide on a career path. Your inability to decide is usually due to lack of information about the occupation, and informational interviews can fill the gaps in your knowledge.

Here is a typical procedure to arrange a professional informational interview: Prepare a set of questions that you want to ask the person, make contact and set up an appointment. Then, meet with the person, and make sure not to exceed the agreed-upon length of the interview.

Let's consider Trish, who is deciding among several careers.

Trish is an ex-administrative assistant who left the job force to raise children and is now ready to re-enter the workforce. She's already doing a lot of research about the fields of healthcare office manager, dental assistant and medical assistant and is considering taking a course in one of these areas. What might she do in terms of informational interviewing?

Trish plans to contact at least one person in each occupation she identified as a potential career direction. During her informational interviews, she'll probably ask questions about the type of work they do, what they enjoy or don't enjoy about their job and what their typical day is like.

She also plans to ask them about hiring needs for this type of job. Did they have a hard time finding work? What would they suggest when it comes time for Trish to seek employment? Do they think their job will be in demand five or 10 years down the road? What trends do they see in the field?

Trish plans to meet with a school advisor or department head in each field at her local community college, as well. This individual will know where the field is headed, its challenges and the needs of employers. An advisor can tell her about necessary training for the job, the types of jobs that exist and where students work when they complete training.

Trish would also benefit from a talk with Human Resources staff members of companies or offices that hire qualified people in her areas of interest. She could even talk to recruiters at employment or placement agencies. She'll want to learn how Human Resources staff members post openings, what skills or qualifications are required for various positions and which career paths are growing.

Regardless of whom she talks to during her informational interviews, Trish needs to be very clear that she's in the career exploration stage—she is gathering information, not asking for a job.



During an informational interview, you might ask about the potential for employment, typical work environment, required education, opportunities for advancement and possible downsides to a particular occupation.



Informational interviewing is more fun than work. It's a chance to talk to people you don't know, ask them all sorts of questions and learn about their everyday work lives.

Trish has her work cut out for her, and so do you. However, informational interviewing is more fun than work. It's a chance to talk to people you don't know, ask them all sorts of questions and learn about their everyday work lives. People love to talk about what they do, and you'll probably find that they'll tell you more than you'd ever want to know!

Informational interviewing will help you gather valuable information about a career field, a particular job within that field or a certain employer. It will also help you learn from people who work directly in your area of interest. You'll explore and gain a better understanding of certain careers, which allows you to clarify your career goals. You can talk with people in a particular field to broaden your network of

contacts for future reference, build confidence for job interviews and networking and access the most up-to-date career information. Informational interviewing can also help you create a strategy for entering your field of interest.

Excited about informational interviewing but not sure how to actually conduct an interview? No worries! We will cover this in detail.

How to Conduct an Informational Interview



Informational interviewing is different from a job interview. The spotlight and the pressure are off you and on someone else.

Informational interviewing *is* different from a job interview. The spotlight and the pressure are off you and on someone else. In an informational interview, you are not interviewing for a job opening. Instead, you're interviewing someone else as you gather information for career exploration. You initiate contact and set up the meeting ("interview") with someone who has experience in the field you're interested in.

Since you're asking someone for his time, set the tone of the conversation with a prepared list of questions to help you with future career decisions. When you call someone for an informational interview, clearly communicate that you are in career transition and his experience will greatly help you evaluate your career decisions.

You'll find that most people are happy to talk to you about their work and are more than willing to help you with your career exploration process.

Now, it's time to figure out who you're going to talk to, and set up the interview!

Step 1: Set up the Interview

Whom should you interview? Start with people you know, and try to locate someone suited for an interview.

You'll be amazed at how people "know someone who knows someone" who's just perfect for an informational interview! If friends and family members don't lead you to an interview subject, call an organization or employer who hires people in your field of interest. If you present yourself in a professional manner, you will find an interview subject. Most people like to talk about their work and provide information to others. It's a chance for them to share what they've learned.



You'll be amazed at how people "know someone who knows someone" who's just perfect for an informational interview!

Here are some pointers to set up the interview:

1. Identify three to five individuals to interview. Ask people you know for referrals.
2. Contact the individuals, and ask them for 30 minutes of their time. You can suggest interviewing them on the phone or in person, at their office, for coffee (your treat) or whatever they prefer.
3. Make it clear that you're not seeking employment, just advice and support.
4. If someone has referred you to this person, mention that person's name early in the conversation.
5. Identify a date, time and location for the interview. Then, exchange phone numbers so that you can confirm the meeting (approximately one day in advance). Remember to be flexible in your scheduling—the people you interview are doing you a favor. Respect their time.

If you feel uncomfortable making the initial phone contact and introducing yourself, use the following phone script. Practice it several times before you make the phone call. You don't have to memorize it—you can refer to it as you speak and improvise.

Informational Interview Phone Script	
Purpose	Script
1. Introduce yourself.	"Hello, my name is <i>[YOUR_NAME]</i> . I'm in a career transition and exploring new career directions. I am interested in learning more about <i>[PROFESSION]</i> as a career."
2. Tell the other person who referred you.	" <i>[REFERRAL_NAME]</i> said you'd be a great person to talk to about this career because of your experience and knowledge." <i>(If no one referred you to this individual, quickly state why you chose to contact this individual.)</i>
3. State the purpose of your call.	"It would be really valuable to me if I could ask you some questions about the work you do, how you got into your profession and what you think of it." <i>(You can complete this statement with your own objective for the informational interview—make sure to communicate your objective very clearly.)</i>

Continued—

Informational Interview Phone Script	
Purpose	Script
4. Determine a date and time.	<p>"Would you be available for a short informational interview to help me in my career research?"</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <p>"What days and times are convenient for you?"</p> <p><i>(select a day and time)</i></p> <p>"Excellent! Do you prefer a phone meeting, or would you like to meet in person?"</p> <p>IF ON THE PHONE:</p> <p>Great, I'll give you a call on [DAY], [MONTH] [DATE] at [TIME].</p> <p>IF IN PERSON:</p> <p>"We can meet at your office or somewhere else, maybe a coffee house. What do you prefer?" <i>(Wait for his answer or together suggest a location.)</i></p> <p>"Great, I'll meet you at [LOCATION] on [DAY], [MONTH] [DATE] at [TIME]. <i>(Make sure to give or get directions.)</i></p> <p>IF NO:</p> <p>"Well, I do appreciate your time. Before I go, I thought I'd ask: Can you think of anyone else I might contact who'd be a good source of information for me—someone else I could interview?" <i>(Wait for an answer.)</i></p>
5. Close the conversation.	<p>IF YOU ARE MEETING:</p> <p>"Thanks again for your time. I'm looking forward to our meeting. Good bye."</p> <p>IF YOU ARE NOT MEETING, BUT NOW HAVE A REFERRAL:</p> <p>"Thanks again for your time and your referral. I'll give [REFERRAL_NAME] a call. Good bye."</p> <p>IF YOU ARE NOT MEETING:</p> <p>"Thanks again for your time. I appreciate it. Good bye."</p>

Now that you have the right person in your sights and a date and time confirmed, it's time to prepare for the interview.

Step 2: Prepare for the Interview

Always be prepared. Have you ever watched an interview on television or listened to one on the radio? The interviewers come prepared with questions and some idea of the person they're interviewing. You should do the same. Following are some pointers for interview preparation.

1. If possible, learn something about the person you'll interview in advance so you can quickly build rapport and have a more meaningful conversation.
2. Research everything you can about your area of interest, the company, organization or occupation of interest *before* the interview. This gives you a basic understanding of the occupation so that you can ask intelligent questions.
3. Prepare a list of questions. It's best to ask questions that let you learn from your interviewee's direct experience. (See the sample questions following the interview instructions.)
4. Dress professionally.
5. Bring copies of your resume, but only distribute it if asked.

Now, it's time for the interview. You're going to step out into the unknown, and learn from a new acquaintance as much as you can about the profession she's in.

Step 3: Conduct the Interview

The interview usually consists of three stages: introduction, question time and closing. We'll walk you through each stage.

Introduction

1. Greet your interviewee by name, tell him your name and thank him for his time.
2. Review your purpose—you want to gather information that will help you with your career planning.
3. To introduce yourself, describe the interest that brought you to interview this individual—make a statement about why her career interests you. For example, "I've always had a strong interest in helping families in need."
4. Share two or three specific experiences that back up your statement. For example, "In a previous position at a for-profit company, I volunteered to head up our annual community service project where we collected household items for families in need."
5. Share relevant details about any specific training or degrees you've completed.



Have you ever watched an interview on television or listened to one on the radio?



Greet your interviewee by name, tell him your name and thank him for his time.

Question Time

1. Transition with a statement such as, “I have five to 10 questions that I’d like to ask, and I expect it will take 30 minutes or so. I’ll be sensitive to the time you’ve allotted me, so I may not ask all of my questions.”
2. Let your interviewee know you’ll take notes so that you don’t forget any of the important details. (If you don’t want to be distracted with note-taking, you can bring a tape recorder.) Make sure to ask the interviewee’s permission to tape the interview.
3. If you plan to take notes by hand, bring a note pad to jot down suggestions and key points from the interview. Don’t use a laptop to take notes because the tapping of keys is distracting and may seem rude to your interviewee.
4. Ask the questions you prepared, but be flexible. You might need to skip some that aren’t relevant or develop a few new ones on the spot.
5. Be aware of the time. If you’re reaching the time limit, acknowledge it, and wrap up your questions.
6. Always ask for a referral at the end of the interview—someone else you could talk to.



If you plan to take notes by hand, bring a note pad to jot down suggestions and key points from the interview.

Conclusion

1. Thank your interviewee for his time and the information he’s provided.
2. Offer to return the favor in the future and be of assistance however you can.
3. Ask, “May I stay in touch with you to keep you posted of my career decision?”
4. Ask for your interviewee’s business card, and provide her with your contact information. Provide your resume if asked.

But, wait, it’s not over yet. You’ll need to do a few more things after the interview.

Step 4: After the Interview

It’s vital to follow up after the interview, and analyze your effectiveness. Here are some pointers.

1. Send a handwritten thank-you note. It provides a personal touch that your interviewee will appreciate. However, if your handwriting’s bad or you need to follow up immediately and can’t wait for postal delivery, send an e-mail.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of your interviewing style. What worked? What could you have done better?



Ask for your interviewee’s business card, and provide her with your contact information.

3. Type your notes, and, then, review them. The handwritten notes you took during the interview are probably pretty rough and might be hard to read. If you taped the interview, you'll need to listen to and transcribe it. If you type your notes, it lets you organize them and read them more easily. Make sure to record the interview date, the person you interviewed, his title and his contact information. Keep these notes in an electronic or printed file for later reference.
4. Review your typed notes, and analyze the information you gathered. Do you need to make any adjustments to your job search, career goals or resume based on this information? Did the interview spark new ideas, new directions or new questions?
5. Don't forget your contact person—the person who gave you the name of the individual you interviewed. Thank him, and let him know the results of the interview.



After the informational interview, type your notes, and, then, review them.

Sample Questions for Informational Interviews

You've had a chance to walk through the interview process on the previous pages. Now's your chance to formulate questions you might want to ask. Of course, the questions *you* ask depend on your needs and your curiosity. However, we've collected a list of just about every question you might want to ask. Take your pick!

Some of the questions focus on exploring a career, and some focus on exploring an organization or place of employment. Most of these are open-ended questions that do not require a yes or no answer, so you can keep the conversation going and learn more. Remember to keep your interview friendly, brief and focused. That means you'll only have time to ask a few of the questions that follow, but pick the ones that mean the most to you, and ask them in any order that makes sense to you.

General

- ➔ What is your job title?
- ➔ How long have you held your position at this company?
- ➔ How did you get involved in this profession?
- ➔ How many years have you been in this profession?

Work Responsibilities

- ➔ Do you work from home, from an office or in the field?
- ➔ Do you communicate primarily by phone, by e-mail or in person?
- ➔ What are your main work duties?
- ➔ Tell me about your typical day (or week).



You've had a chance to walk through the interview process on the previous pages. Now's your chance to formulate questions you might want to ask.

- ➔ What skills do you have that make you good at what you do?
- ➔ What do you like most about your work?
- ➔ What would you like to change about your work? What are your biggest challenges, difficulties, frustrations or recurring problems?

Personal Perspective

- ➔ What are some of the factors that contribute to your success?
- ➔ If you were to start again, would you do anything differently?
- ➔ What qualifications, skills, aptitudes or personality traits are valuable to be successful in this type of work?
- ➔ What are some typical mistakes that prevent someone from advancing in this field?
- ➔ What is the best advice you can give a person interested in this occupation?
- ➔ How would you advise someone to start and build a career in your field today?

Company Culture

- ➔ What is the overall purpose or mission of your organization? Who does your organization serve, and what services does it provide?
- ➔ What are the working conditions like?
- ➔ Tell me about the type of people you work with.
- ➔ Tell me about the management style at your organization.
- ➔ How are you made aware of communications “from above”?
- ➔ Do you feel that your opinions are heard and respected? Are you trusted, and do you trust others?
- ➔ What processes are in place to ensure that projects are managed well, completed on time and meet professional standards?
- ➔ Approximately how many hours per week or per month do you work?

Education and Background

- ➔ What background do you recommend for an entry-level position in this field?
- ➔ What areas of knowledge are most important for advancement in this field?
- ➔ What is your education? What did you have to learn to be good at this job after you finished your formal education? How did you accomplish this?
- ➔ What education or training can help a person get into this line of work?
- ➔ Is licensing or a certificate necessary? If so, how do you get it?

Future Trends

- ➔ Are people needed in this field?
- ➔ What trends or issues do you see in this field during the next five to 10 years?
- ➔ What is your opinion of how this field/job may grow in the future?
- ➔ What is the starting salary range in this field? What is the salary range at different levels of advancement?

Miscellaneous

- ➔ Where can I find more information about this career?
- ➔ Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?
- ➔ Can you think of anyone else I should talk to?

That final question is important. It's your referral question.

Referrals

An important part of the career exploration process is to ask for referrals. At first, you might feel uncomfortable doing so, but, with some practice, it becomes second nature. Later, you may find that you actually like to ask for referrals because it's a chance to learn from others and investigate their life and career experiences.

When you ask for a referral, you're asking for the name of someone who is qualified and experienced. This someone should be an individual who can provide information that helps with your career decisions—and possibly with job leads.

If you do get a referral, always ask the person you're talking to if you can use her name when you contact the referral. For example, if Cheryl refers you to Bob to discuss the accounting field, ask Cheryl if you can use her name when you introduce yourself to Bob. If Bob has a good relationship with Cheryl, he'll be happy to talk to you because you know Cheryl!

Asking for referrals is a great technique to end informational interviews and to build your network. If you feel like you don't know many people, your informational interviews will help you expand your network very quickly. If you interview three people and they each provide you with three new people as referrals, you now have nine more people in your network!

Informational interviewing only gets easier with practice. In the next exercise, guess what you'll do? That's right—a real informational interview!



An important part of the career exploration process is to ask for referrals.

Exercise 3

In this exercise, you'll look at volunteering and networking as ways to tap the hidden job market. Write the answers on a separate piece of paper.

For items 1 through 4, see if your local community has 211 service. If so, call the number, and look up current volunteer opportunities in your community.

1. Which volunteer opportunities are of interest to you?
2. Choose three to consider.
3. What do you think you would learn from these opportunities?
4. How would they benefit your career development?

With the items that follow, you'll prepare for and conduct a real informational interview.

5. Identify three people you would like to conduct an informational interview with, and explain why.
6. Select one person from the list to contact. Write down his contact information.
7. Prepare a phone script for the person.
8. Call the person, and set up the interview. Be sure to set up a date, time and location. Get directions if necessary.
9. Develop a list of at least five to 10 questions (don't forget your referral question).
10. Develop your "Introduction" and "Conclusion" script for the informational interview.

For items 11 through 14, conduct your interview, take notes and answer the following questions.

11. What went well?
12. What did not go well—what would you do differently?
13. Did you get any names of other people you might interview? Who?
14. Type up your interview notes—include both questions and answers.

Review Exercise 3

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Summary

Congratulations! You've taken book concepts and applied them to real life—you should be proud of yourself. It's not easy to talk to people you don't know, tell them about your job hunt and ask for referrals. Nor is it easy to call someone and ask if you can interview him about his job, but you did it. Your informational interview skills will only improve as you talk to more people.

We hope you gained valuable information through the activities in this section. You're one step closer to finding employment!

In the next section, we'll take what you've learned so far and apply it to your pursuit of the right jobs. When you feel comfortable with the material presented in Section 2, move right along!



It's not easy to call someone and ask if you can interview him about his job, but you did it.

Pursue the Right Jobs

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate between proactive and reactive career development behaviors.
2. Apply new job-hunt methods.
3. Create and maintain a Top 10 contact list.
4. Create a flexible networking script.
5. Develop your own elevator speech.
6. Develop a script to approach someone about a job opening.
7. Create a job-hunt strategy, and refine your strategy to create a detailed job-hunt action plan.
8. Practice professional communication to make a positive impression.

Introduction

Now that you have a handle on how to use the job market and networking to your advantage, let's talk about how to be proactive during your job hunt. When you approach your job hunt or career transition in a proactive way (as you network, hold informational interviews and tap the hidden job market), you feel less stressed and pressured. Another way to reduce the stress and pressure of a job hunt is to start laying the groundwork for it before you finish your education.



Start laying the groundwork for your job hunt before you finish your education.

This section gives you pointers for a head start on your job hunt. It might feel like a lot to focus on—conducting a job hunt while you're employed or in school. However, in the end, you'll come out ahead. You'll be equipped to successfully survive future transitions!

Keep in mind that everyone approaches his job hunt differently, and some strategies are better than others. Let's look at the approaches Rachel and Sharon take to see which strategy is more effective.

First we'll study Rachel, who's adopted a proactive job-hunt strategy.

Rachel worked hard to secure her position as a medical coder at a small hospital. She did all the right things: networked with people she knew, attended meetings for a local medical coding association and conducted informational interviews with people in the field. She enjoys her new position and feels more settled after her first year. She's thinking about taking on additional challenges and responsibilities and has her eye on a management role in her department.

The first thing Rachel decides to do is to learn more about what's involved in a management job. That way, she can gain the skills she'll need. Her manager suggests she lead a committee within their department, and Rachel jumps at the chance, knowing this kind of challenging role will give her some great management experience.

Next, Rachel continues to build strong relationships with the people she works with, as well as those in other departments. Rachel begins to feel comfortable talking to some of these people about her career goal. Eventually, a management position opens in her department. Armed with her enhanced skills and confidence, Rachel interviews for the position and gets it!



Build strong relationships with the people you work with, as well as those in other departments.

Now, let's look at someone who's been very reactive with her job-hunt strategy.

Sharon's been trying to complete a career training course for two years. She's also been juggling a full-time job and is now nearing the end of her course. She's quite excited about completing the program but is a little worried too.

You see, Sharon decided to pass on professional association meetings and never attended any job fairs. She figured she'd tackle her job hunt after she completed her course. Unfortunately, it became clear to her that many of the people who had taken the career training course with her already had jobs lined up, and she didn't. Why? Well, these folks had worked on their resumes, attended job fairs and contacted local employers ... and Sharon hadn't.

When Sharon completed her course, it took longer than she expected to find a job because she hadn't laid any of the groundwork for her job hunt. She had no contacts, no network and no resume. She had to start from scratch.

Eventually, she did find work in her field and was very happy to be employed. However, Sharon now realizes that the next time she searches for employment, she won't wait until the last moment!

Rachel and Sharon had different career goals and circumstances, but the biggest difference between them was how they went about the job hunt. Rachel was proactive, and Sharon was reactive. We want to make sure you take the proactive approach. It's more effective and much less stressful.

Whether you're currently employed or unemployed, you should always think about your next career move. In today's world, it's common to change careers often during your lifetime, and you need to be flexible and proactive to handle those changes. Whether it's organizational changes, buyouts, mergers and acquisitions or a dramatic change in your interest level, you never really know how long you'll be at a job.

That's why it's a good idea to think about your next step on the career ladder even when you are employed. True, no employer likes when you look for a job; he wants you to stay where you are and do your work. You want to convey the idea to those around you that you're open to change and possibilities and always seeking ways to grow. This could mean that you want to take on a new project or new responsibilities, work with new people or move to a new position within the company or office. It's perfectly acceptable to move into new positions frequently, as long as the positions provide increasing responsibility and areas of growth for you, and you've maintained a good reputation while moving from one position to another.



It's a good idea to think about your next step on the career ladder even when you are employed.

Proactive Approach

It's proactive to look for your next job while you're employed. After all, you act in advance, work toward a goal and overcome anticipated challenges. With a proactive approach, you plan for the future and lay the groundwork for changes or goals. This means that you don't just put your nose to the grindstone and focus solely on your current job tasks. Instead, you continue many of the activities you learned about already: networking, volunteering and informational interviewing.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when they find a job is this: They breathe a huge sigh of relief—and then no longer attend professional meetings, keep their ears open for job leads or pay any attention to the local business climate. Just because you're employed doesn't mean you shouldn't network and make people aware of your presence in the community and your career aspirations.



Students often make the same mistake. They assume their sole focus should be on courses and grades, and they forget all about the outside world. Just because you're in school doesn't mean you shouldn't network within your community.

Just because you're in school doesn't mean you shouldn't network within your community.

Reactive Approach

Most people look for a job in a reactive way—they look for work as soon as they lose their job.

Let's look at a typical reactive job hunter.

Billy worked as a medical transcriptionist for a local practice and for months saw the signs that his office was going to outsource transcription. Billy could have started his job hunt when he first saw the signs. Instead, he ignored the whole situation, dragged his feet and waited until he got the official word that all local employees would lose their jobs.

He became extremely anxious once the reality of unemployment set in. He felt completely unprepared for change and started desperately applying for any position that he was remotely qualified for. Then, he took the first one offered to him. It was a good position but didn't really meet his salary needs or match his skill set. He was happy to be employed only three weeks after his layoff, but he deeply regretted not taking the necessary steps months ago to find something more rewarding.

Of course, sometimes, we're caught unaware and find ourselves looking for jobs when we didn't plan to. That's all right; even unexpected job hunts can be conducted proactively if you follow the methods in this section.

Job-hunt Methods

You've already learned some methods to help you identify the career you really want and the place where you want to work. Well, guess what? You can use those same methods in your job hunt to get leads, find job openings, learn more about employers and gain fresh skills. This section presents some new methods for you to try and then reviews the "old" methods you encountered previously in this kit.

You probably won't use every method in this section, but it's a good idea to use a balanced, well-rounded approach to your job hunt and not rely on the one or two techniques that you're comfortable with. **Challenge yourself:** Experiment with a couple of new methods. You'll be glad you did!



Challenge yourself:
Experiment with a couple of new job-hunt methods. You'll be glad you did!

Job-hunt Workshops

Job-hunt workshops are a great place to brush up on your job-hunt skills *and* network with others. Instructors at job-hunt workshops are knowledgeable about the job market and may have some helpful tips for your specific needs. To find out about these workshops, contact your local Workforce Center, any local career counselor, the community college or your library. These workshops are usually free or low cost.

Job Fairs

Your local newspaper provides announcements or ads about upcoming job fairs. There are several types of job fairs:

- ➔ **Industry-specific:** Employers from a single industry, such as health care, come together to present their hiring needs.
- ➔ **Population-specific:** These fairs target a certain audience, such as recent graduates or older workers.
- ➔ **Large employer:** A single employer (such as one that is expanding or opening a new location and has extensive hiring needs) puts on these fairs.
- ➔ **General:** These fairs represent a variety of companies and industries.

Do *not* go to a job fair before you do some basic research: Find out which companies are attending and what kind of jobs they have open, and get some general information about the companies that interest you. You'll be more effective at the job fair with the information you gain from your research.



Dress professionally when you attend a job fair.

Before you arrive at the fair, make sure you know which companies you want to visit. Dress in a professional manner, and bring several copies of your resume. Be prepared with a 30-second elevator speech (more about that later), and have some questions ready for each employer—questions you feel will give you the information that you need to make an informed decision about that employer.

Many employers provide application forms and explain how to apply for their openings. This means you may have to fill in some information by hand—practice your handwriting or printing ahead of time so that it's legible. Most of us are so used to typing and using word-processing software that we've forgotten how to write (or spell)!

When you leave a company booth, take the business card of the person you spoke with, and jot something on the back of the card about the individual. You can then follow up with that person after the fair.

Note: A job fair is also useful if you've already applied for a position with the employer. You can use the job fair as an opportunity to reintroduce yourself, let the representative know you submitted an application and find out about your application's status.

Online Networking Groups

Did you know that social networking has reached the business community? Now you can connect with people in your field and learn about employers through professional online networking groups, such as LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/>).

For example, when you join LinkedIn, you enter your professional and educational profile. Then, you invite people to join your network via a simple e-mail invitation. Once they've joined your network, you have access to all the people in their network. You can get in touch with people you've never met through the contacts you have—and the contacts that *your* contacts have. LinkedIn even has its own job-search tool. This is a great tool to locate experienced people who can open doors for you in the job market.



Did you know that social networking has reached the business community?

Trade Shows and Conferences

Whatever industry or field you pursue, it will probably have a professional association that puts on an annual conference or trade show. Professionals from across the country gather at these events to exchange ideas and best practices. Often, there will be an exhibit hall where companies display their products and services. There's usually a calendar of seminars and classes, as well. Locate the national professional association in your field (or its local chapter in your community) to inquire about upcoming regional or national conferences. These are excellent opportunities for networking!

Online Job Banks

The Riley Guide has a comprehensive list of job bank Web sites at www.rileyguide.com/multiple.html.

Online job banks are a tremendous resource for job seekers. Some are all encompassing, such as www.monster.com or www.careerbuilder.com. Others are industry-specific, such as www.dice.com. And, then, there are online job search engines that scan ALL the online job banks for you, such as www.indeed.com or www.job-search-engine.com.

Local Professional Hangouts

Bet you never considered a coffee house or restaurant as a job-hunt tool. Think about it—where do people who do the kind of work you want to do or work for the employer you want to work for spend their time? There are probably a few places that they congregate before work, at lunch or after work. Find out where they hang out, and do the same. Sure, you'll have to buy a cup of coffee or a snack, but it's worth it when you think about the conversations you'll overhear and the company culture you'll observe!



Bet you never considered a coffee house or restaurant as a job-hunt tool.

Old Favorites

Don't forget your "old favorites"—job-hunt methods from previous sections. Here is a short list to jog your memory:

- ➔ Networking and informational interviewing
- ➔ Workforce centers
- ➔ Employment support groups
- ➔ Local newspapers
- ➔ Professional organizations
- ➔ Non-profit meetings
- ➔ Fitness centers

Networking is the most useful of all of these methods, so let's take a look at how to incorporate networking into your job hunt.



Don't forget your "old favorites"—job-hunt methods from previous sections.

Use Networking in Your Job Hunt

Experts say that networking leads to 80 percent of all jobs. That's because when you network, it brings you face to face with people "in the know"—people who are aware of unadvertised jobs or upcoming staffing needs. Also, most employers prefer to hire someone they know personally or someone who was referred to them.

Your goal is to build a vast network of people that eventually leads you to an employer who needs your skills and has an open position that's a match for you. During a job hunt, networking gives you a chance to let others know of your availability. As your network grows, so does the news that you're available and seeking employment.

Build Your Network Contact List

The easiest way to start networking during your job hunt is to write down the names of all the people you know. Don't worry if you don't know them well. Just jot down a name, job title and how you know that person (for example, "former supervisor at ABC Accounting" or "daughter's classmate's parent").



The easiest way to start networking your job hunt is to write down the names of all the people you know.

Ideas to Build Your Contact List

- ➔ Current and former co-workers
- ➔ Current and former supervisors or managers
- ➔ Outside vendors from current or former jobs
- ➔ Current and previous customers
- ➔ Personal friends, parents, siblings and relatives
- ➔ Neighbors and friends of family
- ➔ Current and previous friends from school
- ➔ Friends from sports and hobbies
- ➔ Employment counselors and recruiters
- ➔ Professional service providers, such as a doctor, lawyer, banker, insurance agent, accountant, postman and mechanic
- ➔ Personal service providers, such as hairstylists, barbers and personal trainers
- ➔ Teachers and community leaders
- ➔ Members of your church, club or professional organization
- ➔ Volunteering contacts



Your initial job-hunt contact list might include neighbors and friends of family.

This is your initial job-hunt contact list. Now it's time to narrow the names to your Top 10 list:

1. **Identify Your Top 10 List:** Identify the Top 10 people who you think would be the most helpful to you in your current situation. These are people who have experience in the field you are pursuing or know people who do—or who simply know lots of people and would be happy to assist you.
2. **Get Information:** Gather complete contact information for each person: name, job title, place of employment, phone number, e-mail address and address.
3. **Make Contact:** E-mail, phone or write to the people on your Top 10 list. Let them know you're in the midst of a job hunt, and briefly summarize your goals. Ask them if they'd be willing to sit down with you or speak with you on the phone for a few minutes to share any ideas they might have about your goals. Your objective is to arrange a one-on-one meeting where you can tell each person about the type of work you're looking for and ask for advice, tips or suggestions. If you have trouble making the initial contact, follow the phone script that we discussed previously. As you talk, make sure to:
 - ➔ **Ask for help:** During your initial phone, e-mail or mail conversation, provide the names of companies or offices that you're interested in, job titles you're seeking and the types of people you'd like to connect with. Let your contact know what you need and how she can help you.
 - ➔ **Make an appointment:** Ask your contact for a date and time to meet—for coffee or lunch (your treat), at his office or for a phone meeting. Let her know you'd like to generate ideas and are not asking her for a job.
4. **Hold a Meeting:** Thank your contact for agreeing to meet, and let him know you'll meet only for the agreed-upon amount of time. Restate the purpose of your meeting and what you hope to accomplish. For example, "As I mentioned during our phone call, I'm exploring opportunities in the criminal justice field and would like to hear where you see growth areas."
5. **End the Meeting:** Be prepared with questions, and always ask: "Who else would you recommend I talk to?" Then, ask how you might help your contact and make sure to follow through.
6. **Stay in Contact After the Meeting:** Follow up with your referrals. Thank your contact, and keep her in the loop regarding your career progress. As always, it's best to send a handwritten, personal thank-you note.



Ask your contact for a date and time to meet—for coffee or lunch (your treat), at his office or for a phone meeting.

Use a Networking Script

When you contact people during the networking process, there are a few main points you'll want to be sure to touch on. First, do the people whom you contact know anyone else who could help you? Also, do they know any organizations that may employ people with your skills? It's good to ask if you can use their name when you contact the people they referred you to. Always ask how you can help them, too. Networking is a two-way street!

To help you with the important points, here are a few networking scripts you can customize for your own personality and use. Be sure to adjust them based on your career or job choice, as well. Take time to write your own script, and practice it before you call someone. When you practice, try talking in front of a mirror as you smile. The smile will actually come through on the phone!



A smile will actually come through on the phone.

Here is a script to contact someone in your network who works for an office that could possibly use your skill set:

Action Script

1. **Introduce yourself, and make a connection.** “Hi, Bill! This is Amy Smith. We worked together at ABC Company a few years ago. Remember me? How’s your new job treating you?”
2. **State the situation.** “ABC’s been cutting back and laid off 10 people, including myself, last month. It was a real shock, but I’m ready to find some new opportunities.”
3. **Ask for assistance.** “Anyway, the reason I’m calling is to find out if I can talk to you in the next week or so to learn more about the company you work for, and to brainstorm ideas for my job hunt.”
4. **Be prepared.** Bill might want to talk to you right away, or he might not have time. Be ready to jot down notes, and be respectful of his time.

If he can talk to you right now—“You’ve got time to talk right now? Great! So, why don’t you tell me a bit about your company and its hiring practices. If you’ve got any ideas for my job hunt, I’d love to hear them. And, if you can think of anyone else for me to talk to, let me know.”

If he can talk to you later—“So, what day and time is good? Do you want to meet at your work or somewhere else? I’d be happy to take you for coffee, and we could talk there.” (Make sure to confirm the date, time, location and directions.)

5. **Follow up if Bill mentioned any possibilities for hiring.** “Bill, you mentioned a few possibilities for openings. Can I call you tomorrow when you’re at work to confirm that information? When would be a good time for me to call?”

Here is a script to contact a referral from someone in your network. In this case, your friend Beth suggested you call Tom, a former co-worker of hers, who knows a lot about the field that interests you:

Action Script

1. **Introduce yourself, and make a connection.** “Hi, Tom. My name is Amy Smith. A mutual friend of ours, Beth, suggested that I call you. I believe you and Beth used to work together at XYZ Insurance.”
2. **State the situation.** “Beth suggested that I call you because I’ve worked in the medical field for the past five years, and I’m exploring new career opportunities. She thought you might be willing to provide me with some advice and helpful information.”
3. **Be prepared for some resistance.** Tom might say something like: “I can’t imagine how my advice would help you, and I really don’t know of any job openings right now.”

You respond: “Beth said you’re quite knowledgeable about companies in the field and the kind of qualifications and experience that they look for in employees. That information would really help me understand if I’m suited for this field.”

Tom: “Yes, of course. I’ve learned a lot about the industry through the years and could probably give you some pointers.”

4. **Set up a time to meet.** “So, what day and time are best? Do you want to meet at your work or somewhere else? I’d be happy to take you for coffee, and we could talk there.” (Make sure to confirm the date, time, location and directions.)
5. **Follow up if Tom mentioned any possibilities for hiring.** “Tom, you mentioned a few possibilities for openings. Can I call you tomorrow when you’re at work to confirm that information? When would be a good time for me to call?”

Use Your Networking Contacts to Validate Jobs

You’ll probably continue to review the classified ads, trade publications and online job postings as you hunt for jobs. However, if you see a job that you’re particularly interested in, use your networking skills before you submit your resume or application. Ask the people you know if they’re familiar with this particular employer. Find out if they know anyone who works for the employer. Once you have a real contact in the company, you can learn more about the employer. (What exactly does the office do? What is its core business? What challenges does it have currently? What is the culture like?) You may even be able to identify the contact person (the hiring manager for the position you’re interested in, a Human Resources manager or a key person in the department where the opening is located).



You’ll probably continue to review the classified ads, trade publications and online job postings as you hunt for jobs.

When you call the contact person, introduce yourself, and state that a mutual acquaintance referred you. Ask for a few minutes of her time. Tell her you're interested in applying for the position you saw posted and that you'd like to learn more about the organization and the nature of the position. The contact person might ask you more about your background and experience, so be prepared with a brief introduction, a summary of your career and reasons why you're qualified for this particular position. Hopefully, she'll offer to let the hiring manager know the two of you spoke. That way, the hiring manager can keep an eye out for your resume. After your conversation, drop the contact person a thank-you note.

Following your conversation with the contact person, you should have more insight about the company's mission and goals, as well as the purpose of this particular position. Use the information to customize your cover letter and resume to meet the employer's specific needs. We'll discuss resume preparation and cover letters in a later section.

Your Personal Introduction

When you network, it's a good idea to have in mind what you'll say to people you want to meet. It's just as important to have something in writing. That's where an elevator speech comes into play.

Elevator Speech

Networking requires an **elevator speech** (a short, personal introduction) that you can recite in a minute or less. Why is it called an "elevator speech"? That's easy! Imagine that you're in career transition and decide to attend an industry trade show for a field you're interested in. During the show, you visit many booths, attend seminars, talk to people and finally identify several organizations you'd love to work for.

Now, imagine it's the end of a long day, and you step into the elevator of the hotel to return to your room. Another person joins you in the elevator, and you notice he's wearing a trade show badge, just like you. The gentleman nods and greets you, and you do the same. You exchange a few words about the show. Then, he asks, "So, what do you do?" If this gentleman works for one of the companies you're interested in, what do you say? You probably have about 30 seconds to clearly introduce yourself and state the kind of opportunity you're looking for—the length of time it takes to get to your floor. And that's your elevator speech!

There are countless success stories of job seekers who used an effective elevator speech after meeting the right person at the right time. The opportunities to use your elevator speech are limitless—at a luncheon meeting, in a classroom or at a sports event. You never know whom you'll meet, so be prepared. Every interaction is a possible networking opportunity, and you don't want to be caught off guard and stumble on your words.



When you network, it's a good idea to have in mind what you'll say to people you want to meet. That's where an elevator speech comes into play.

It's a good idea to prepare several different elevator speeches of different lengths for different situations. Here are a few sample scripts, along with the key points they cover. Feel free to use any of these for your own elevator speech, but remember to modify these examples based on your own career goals and job hunt.

Basic Elevator Speech

Key Points:

- ➔ Name
- ➔ Field
- ➔ Interest

Script:

“Hi, my name is _____. I’m in the _____ field, and I’m interested in _____.”

Fill in the last blank with your current career aspiration. For example, maybe you want to stay within your field and move into a position of different responsibilities, or maybe you want to move into a different career.



There are countless success stories of job seekers who used an effective elevator speech after meeting the right person at the right time.

Intermediate Elevator Speech

Key Points:

- ➔ Name
- ➔ Results
- ➔ Experience
- ➔ Assistance needed
- ➔ Interests

Script:

“Hi, my name is _____. I have more than _____ years of experience in _____. What I particularly enjoy doing is _____. As a result, I have been able to _____. Are you aware of any _____?”

Advanced Elevator Speech

Key Points:

- ➔ Name
- ➔ Experience
- ➔ Recent position
- ➔ Interests
- ➔ Assistance needed

Script:

“Hi, my name is _____. I’ve been working as a personal fitness trainer for the past 12 years. My most recent position was as lead trainer for a health club that’s part of a nationwide chain. I’m exploring new opportunities in the health and wellness industry and am especially interested in companies that focus on the importance of nutrition, as well as exercise. It would be helpful to me if you have any ideas about organizations that fit this description.”

Graduate’s Elevator Speech

Key Points:

- ➔ Name
- ➔ Graduation date
- ➔ Degree/Certificate
- ➔ Interests

Script:

“Hi, my name is _____. I will be graduating/I just graduated from _____ with a _____ in _____. I’m interested in _____.”

Regardless of the script you use, your elevator speech must meet the following criteria to be effective.

- ➔ **Clear:** Don’t use buzzwords, jargon or industry-specific terminology. Don’t leave any room for confusion.
- ➔ **Succinct:** Use short, easy-to-understand statements. Don’t get overly wordy. When in doubt, keep your introduction simple.

- ➔ **Specific:** Don't use broad, generic words in your introduction. Be very specific about what you're looking for and what you can offer. The more specific you are, the more likely people can think of concrete ideas and resources for you.
- ➔ **Unique:** Communicate something different or unique about your background, what you have to offer or what you're looking for. This will make you more memorable.

Exercise 4

It's time to put into practice what you've learned—think about which job-hunt methods to use and whom to contact. Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. **Review the job-hunt methods we've discussed, and select a few to research further. What specific resources are available in your community? Based on the research you've done, are these methods effective in your current job hunt?**
2. **Complete your job-hunt contact list. List the names of people you know, along with their job titles and the companies that they work for. Go through this list, and identify 10 key people who you think would be most helpful to you during your job hunt or career transition.**
3. **Identify five to 10 everyday situations in which you interact with people and can talk about your career or job-hunt needs.**
4. **Write a short phone script to talk to someone with whom you're networking for the first time. This can either be a script for someone you know or someone you're referred to.**
5. **Now let's work on your elevator speech. Imagine two different situations you might find yourself in where you'd have the opportunity to introduce yourself. Write a different elevator speech for each situation. Note: Make sure each speech contains your name, your experience, your skills or interests and the assistance that you need.**

Review Exercise 4

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Target the Decision-maker



It's important to target the actual decision-maker for a job opening.

Assume your networking has worked its magic. Now what? Your next challenge is to submit a resume or application—but to whom should you send it? Human Resources? Someone in the department that's hiring? Someone else? Small companies with less than 50 people often do not have an on-staff Human Resources person. Instead, an office manager or general manager handles the hiring needs. Larger companies probably have an entire Human Resources Department that collects resumes and applications for job postings. However, they may pass the resumes to the department that has the open position. From there, a specific person or a small group of people screens the resumes and applications for important criteria that relate to the position. Ultimately, who needs to see the resume to make a decision?

It's important to identify the actual decision-maker for the job opening. Then, you can tailor your cover letter, resume or application to the right individual. Once you submit your information, you have a real, live decision-maker (not just a "Human Resources representative") to follow up with. Of course, it can be a challenge to reach the decision-maker because this person is probably a very busy manager and may not see it as a priority to return your call. However, if you've done your homework and can mention a referral from someone in your network, the decision-maker will be more likely to return your call.

Once you get the decision-maker on the phone, be prepared to introduce yourself and succinctly ask your follow-up questions. You might want to ask:

- ➔ "I submitted my resume on February 1, and I'm calling to see if I have passed your initial screening."

(For the following questions, assume that the company received your resume and that you are qualified.)

- ➔ "Can you share with me your hiring process? What are your next steps?" "When can I expect to hear from your hiring team for an interview?"
- ➔ "Who will conduct the interviews?"
- ➔ "How can I learn more about the responsibilities or nature of this job in addition to what was included in the job posting?"

While you talk on the phone, please remember that the decision-maker may be in a hurry and only able to spend a few minutes with you. Be respectful of her time, and thank her.



While you talk on the phone, please remember that the decision-maker may be in a hurry and only able to spend a few minutes with you.

Create a Job-hunt Strategy

At this point, you probably know your strengths and understand what you have to offer an employer. You've built your network and have a pretty good idea of employers in the area. And, hopefully, you feel comfortable with your elevator speech.

Now it's time to create a job-hunt strategy. A **job-hunt strategy** is an overall approach to achieve your specific job goal. It should include all the different activities necessary to accomplish your goal. For example, if your goal is to land an entry-level accounting job with a public accounting firm, your job-hunt strategy will be different from someone with a goal to work as a medical coder in a large hospital. Each activity in your strategy should align with your ultimate goal.

For example, your job-hunt strategy likely includes many of the following types of activities:

- ➔ Talk to people in your network.
- ➔ Schedule informational interviews.
- ➔ Attend professional organization meetings.
- ➔ Prepare a letter of introduction (more on this later).
- ➔ Prepare several versions of your resume (more on this later).
- ➔ Prepare several cover letters (more on this later).
- ➔ Follow up with everyone who provides job leads or valuable resources.
- ➔ Attend a job-hunt group.
- ➔ Research employers that match your needs.
- ➔ Continually review and fine-tune your career goals.
- ➔ Network and use online search engines to uncover job leads.

It's easy for job seekers to get overwhelmed with their job hunt when they have no strategy. That's why it's helpful to think of your job-hunt strategy as a compass that points you in the right direction of your job goal each day. And, if you're currently looking for a job, don't think of yourself as unemployed. Instead, remember that you are carrying out a well-designed marketing strategy to sell your skills and experience to a prospective employer.

Next, you're going to take your strategy and create a specific action plan.



It's easy for job seekers to get overwhelmed with their job hunt when they have no strategy.

The Job-hunt Action Plan

An **action plan** provides you with specific steps to take and a timeframe for when to take them. It helps you successfully achieve your goal—to secure a job in your field of interest!

To create your action plan, take your basic job strategy and refine it until you have a detailed list of tasks assigned to a calendar.

Review Job-hunt Strategy Activities

First, look at the list of general activities in your job-hunt strategy. Think about the activities that would work best for you. Be selective, and choose the ones that will help you get to your goal.

Determine Frequency

Second, review the list, break down the activities into specific tasks and determine how often you need to perform them. Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Be realistic about what you can accomplish given your personal life and commitments. But, know that your job hunt is your highest priority, and treat it as your job.

For example, here are specific tasks that you can do at the beginning of your job hunt, then daily, weekly, monthly and ongoing:

Initially

1. Register for job-hunt services with your local employment center.
2. Develop a letter of introduction (discussed in greater detail later in this kit).
3. Develop a “master resume” (discussed in greater detail later in this kit).
4. Develop a reference sheet (discussed in greater detail later in this kit).
5. Develop a cover letter template that you can tailor to a specific job (discussed in greater detail later in this kit).

Daily

1. Make contacts to expand your network.
2. Send letters of introduction, cover letters and resumes.
3. Follow up on calls made in previous weeks.
4. Follow up on letters and resumes sent in previous weeks.
5. Follow up on job leads from your network.
6. Send thank-you notes as needed.



Look at the list of general activities in your job-hunt strategy. Think about the activities that would work best for you.

Weekly

1. Review jobs that you find on online job banks.
2. Research employers of interest.
3. Review jobs that newspapers list.
4. Research jobs that you find on employer's Web sites.
5. Target your letter of introduction, resume and cover letter toward your identified companies.
6. Set up and attend informational interviews with employers and people of interest.
7. Participate in networking groups/events.

Monthly

1. Review trade and professional journals.
2. Review local business newspapers, magazines and journals.
3. Talk and network with your references.

On-going/As needed

1. Attend job-search training and support meetings.
2. Update your resume, cover letter and letter of introduction.
3. Attend job fairs and career fairs.
4. Prepare for interviews.
5. Interview with employers for jobs.

Create a Calendar

Now that you have a list of tasks and their frequency, create a calendar just for job-search purposes. A calendar in a "week-at-a-glance" format will probably work best. Review your list of tasks, and plug each task into the appropriate date and time. This requires that you do enough research in advance to know, for example, which professional association meetings occur on which days and at what time. It also means that you need to decide what specific times and days to do general job-search activities, such as review online job banks and revise your resume.

Take a look at the sample calendar that follows. Think about where you can plug in other tasks, such as working on your resume and sending thank-you notes.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7 am							
8 am							
9 am		Make phone calls	Make phone calls	Make phone calls	Make phone calls	Make phone calls	
10 am							
11 am							
12 pm		Attend Women's Business Group					
1 pm							
2 pm							
3 pm							
4 pm							
5 pm					Attend Job Seekers Group		
6 pm							
7 pm							
8 pm							
9 pm							

Tools for Success

You wouldn't go on a backpacking trip unprepared—you'd gather necessary supplies to take with you. The same goes for your job hunt! There are certain tools and supplies you need to ensure you're organized, efficient and productive with your time and professional in your interactions and communications with others.

Here is a list of those tools and supplies. Evaluate them, and decide which will meet your needs and goals. Then, check them off as you acquire them.

- ➔ Rolodex or some means to organize business cards
- ➔ Database or file to store contact information and notes on the people you meet
- ➔ Calendar (manual or electronic) to schedule appointments with yourself and others



A calendar is a useful job-hunt tool.

- ➔ Three-ring binder(s) to organize the research that you gather about employers, industries, occupations and the jobs that you apply for
- ➔ Electronic file system for your resumes, cover letters, letters of introduction and other communications (thank-you letters, networking letters and follow-up letters)
- ➔ File folder for any job-related expenses that you incur (Some might be tax deductible, so consult your tax preparer to find out.)
- ➔ Voicemail/answering machine
- ➔ Briefcase or tote bag
- ➔ Leather binder to carry your resumes, letters of introduction and cover letters
- ➔ White board or notepad to make notes or track job leads
- ➔ Bulletin board to post noteworthy items
- ➔ Access to fax and copy machines
- ➔ E-mail account perhaps just for your job hunt (This is the e-mail address you include on your resume.)
- ➔ Supply of envelopes, paper and stamps

Tip!

Don't worry! You don't need all of these items to start your job hunt—you'll acquire them through time. Just use this list to get organized and help you take your job hunt seriously.

You'll find that you do certain things—communicate with people by phone or e-mail, set appointments and participate in interviews—on a regular basis as you arm yourself with your supplies and start the job hunt. It's important that you conduct these activities in a professional and courteous manner.

Implement Your Action Plan

Now that you have your tools for success and a calendar with scheduled tasks and events, carry out your action plan! As you implement your plan, you might find that certain tasks are easy, while others are more difficult. Or you might find that certain tasks take longer than you think. Keep track of your observations, and make adjustments to your action plan and calendar on a regular basis. It's perfectly acceptable to revise your action plan as long as the revisions are in line with your goals.

If there are tasks you never get to, re-evaluate the purpose of those tasks to determine if they are truly important to your goal. If they aren't, remove them from your calendar, and don't worry about them. However, if they are important, you need to figure out why you're not doing those tasks, as well as how to complete those tasks.

For example, suppose you notice that you don't make time to schedule one-on-one networking appointments. You're very aware that networking is vital to your career goal, but you often put off this task. Well, some people find new or unfamiliar tasks risky or scary. Is that how you feel about networking? If that's the case, break down networking into smaller tasks that don't feel so scary, and move forward with them. The important thing is to get started!

As you carry out your action plan, acknowledge all the great things that you *do* accomplish. Even though the ultimate success is getting a job offer, it's vital to track your mini-successes along the way. Each step will take you to your final victory—a job!

Leave Positive First Impressions

As you implement your action plan, remember that the first impression you leave with anyone could make or break you during your job hunt. Courteous and professional communication is a major component of leaving a positive first impression. The Golden Rule should guide your behavior—treat others as you wish to be treated. We all want to feel respected, and that includes the busy professionals you connect with during your job hunt.



Even though the ultimate success is getting a job offer, it's vital to track your mini-successes along the way.



The first impression you leave with anyone could make or break you during your job hunt.

You need to respect the demands on your audience, especially the time constraints. Things that are high priority to you, such as a return call about a job interview, are not necessarily high priority for others.

It's only natural to feel nervous when you communicate with people you don't know. Be prepared! This will help you reduce that nervousness. Identify the goal of your conversation, the major points you'd like to make and the outcome you desire. This will help you focus. Then, have your introduction or elevator speech ready. Finally, try to anticipate questions you might get, and think through some possible responses.

Of course, once you actually talk to the person, you may feel compelled to try to impress him with your abilities and skills. Resist this compulsion, and try not to dominate the conversation—you want to let the other person speak, too.

Remember to listen, as well as talk, and pay attention to nonverbal cues, such as gestures, body language and voice tone. These cues help you get a better sense of how your audience is receiving your message. For example, crossed arms might indicate that someone is defensive and that you need to lighten your tone. Glazed eyes could indicate that your audience is bored and that you need to interject some humor or a personal anecdote. And tapping feet may mean that you're running out of time and need to get to the point.



Remember to listen, as well as talk, and pay attention to nonverbal cues, such as gestures, body language and voice tone.

It's important to close with a heartfelt thank you once you say what you need to say as professionally and courteously as possible. Expressing thanks at the end of an interaction makes a lasting positive impression. Following up with a handwritten thank-you note makes an even greater impression because it's such a rare event in today's busy world of electronic communications. Find a simple but professional thank-you note. People will hold on to the physical thank-you note and may even post it in their office, whereas they will probably delete your thank-you e-mail as soon as they read it!



Following up with a handwritten thank-you note makes a great impression because it's such a rare event in today's busy world of electronic communications.

After a job interview, send a note to each person who interviewed you, or address the note to the entire group. If a hiring team interviews five different people and only one person sends a thank-you note, whom do you think they'll remember? When you send a thank-you note, it's also a good opportunity to send an article or some information that might interest the recipient. For example, maybe one of your interviewers mentioned she liked to cook in her personal time. You could include a recipe or book suggestion with your thank-you note. Little gestures like this go a long way to create a positive impression.

Now, here are some tips to make sure you leave a positive first impression.

Communication Tips for Success

Build rapport and connection. Engage in a little "small talk" at the beginning of your networking conversation before you dive into the career-oriented questions you prepared. Be naturally curious. Ask questions like, "Did you have a busy day?" or "How was your weekend?"

Be genuine as you communicate with others. People will see through you if you're not honest or are not being yourself. Sometimes, it's hard to feel like yourself when you're nervous during a job interview or when you meet new people. A series of slow, deep breaths can calm you and help settle your nerves.

Smile! You may find yourself so focused on what you want to communicate that you forget to relax and smile as you interact with professionals. A smile can go a long way toward maintaining a friendly interaction.



A smile can go a long way toward maintaining a friendly interaction.



Some people like to use e-mail to set dates and times for meetings because their electronic calendar is tied to their e-mail.

Set Appointments

Another part of your job hunt includes meetings and appointments with employers and people in your network. Use these appointments to share information, conduct informational interviews and formally interview for a job. You'll have more success with appointment setting if you can be specific about the days and times that work best for you. Go ahead and suggest a day and time that you're available to meet; this makes the planning much easier for the person on the receiving end. If your date and time don't work for that person, he'll suggest an alternative. Eventually, you'll settle on something.

Some people like to use e-mail to set dates and times for meetings because their electronic calendar is tied to their e-mail. However, if you send an e-mail to someone and don't get a response within a week, send a follow-up e-mail with details of your meeting time and date. Remember, it's easy for busy people to overlook e-mails during a hectic workday. Don't take it personally.

Once you confirm your meeting date and time, send a reminder a few days before your scheduled appointment. We all appreciate a friendly reminder when we have so many things on our plates! The reminder should indicate the date and time, spell out your intention (what you hope to learn or accomplish) and how long you'd like to meet. Always provide a cell phone number or other contact number in case the person needs to call you at the last minute. Don't forget to describe yourself (and have the other person do the same) if you're meeting somewhere and have never seen one another before.

Before you meet anyone by phone or in person, do your homework. Don't waste someone's time by not being prepared—that's one sure way to leave a bad first impression! Do your research on the employer, occupation or industry. Take some notes in advance of the points you want to communicate about yourself, and write down the important questions you want to ask. You might also gather information about yourself, such as a resume (which we'll cover later in this kit), and bring it with you to your meeting.

In-person Meeting

If your meeting takes place in person in a coffee shop or a restaurant, get there early. Stand up, greet the person with a warm smile and reach your hand to shake his when he arrives. As you speak with that person, note his body language, and make sure you're on track in terms of your intent, his reactions and the time remaining for the meeting. Smile occasionally to show you're happy to have the meeting. And, of course, remember to thank the person at the end.



If your meeting takes place in person in a coffee shop or a restaurant, get there early.

In a formal job interview, the person in charge will often let you know how much time the interview will take. Keep this in mind as you respond to questions. Don't let yourself get carried away with one or two questions and not have enough time to thoroughly answer others. And remember to stay focused and be succinct. Your audience can always ask you for more details.

Phone Meeting

If your meeting takes place on the phone, be sure to talk on a good-quality telephone. If you use your cell phone, make sure ahead of time that it has good reception. Sit in a quiet spot without background noise. You won't have the advantage of seeing your audience to note body language, so you'll have to be very focused on listening.

Be aware of your voice tone and volume. You might even ask the person on the receiving end if he can hear you well enough. This is very important if you talk to a group of people who are sitting around a speaker phone. And don't forget to smile! That's right, a smile comes through in your voice. The person on the receiving end can sense you're pleased to talk to him.



If your meeting takes place on the phone, be sure to talk on a good-quality telephone or cell phone that has a good reception.

Use Voicemail

If you decide to communicate by phone, you may find it's rare for the individual to actually pick up the phone. Most likely, you'll get voicemail when you try to contact someone. However, you might have better luck if you call first thing in the morning or after 5 p.m. These are times when people are more likely to answer the phone because it's before or after the peak business day.

If you call and get voicemail, you can choose not to leave a message and continue to call until the person actually answers. Be aware though, that many offices have caller identification, so if the person you're trying to reach is in the office but not picking up the phone, he'll continue to see your phone number on the display.

When you do get voicemail and decide to leave a message, make the message short and to the point. State your name, the person who referred you and the purpose of your call. Indicate that you'd like to speak briefly. Then, give the person specific times when you are available during the next few days. Repeat your phone number slowly at the end of your message.

If you do not get a return call after a week, try again. The person you're attempting to reach may be out of town. It's best to always give the recipient of your call the benefit of the doubt—don't assume he's not calling because he doesn't want to talk to you. Perhaps he hasn't returned your message because he's been in meetings for several days or in a conference. Or maybe he's been ill. You never know!



When you do get voicemail and decide to leave a message, make the message short and to the point.

If a person is in the office but doesn't return your call, it's probably because you're not a high priority. Simply continue to call and leave a professional and upbeat message. Eventually, the squeaky wheel will get the grease, and you'll get a call back. If all else fails, you could shift to another means of communication and use e-mail, fax or direct mail.

If you make a lot of phone calls and set a lot of appointments, it's important to track your progress. Are you getting through to people? Are they calling you back? Are you having any difficulties getting in touch with people?

Keep Track of Open and Closed Doors



As you attempt to contact key people, keep in mind that there's a fine line between being professionally persistent and being a nag.

As you attempt to contact key people, keep in mind that there's a fine line between being professionally persistent and being a nag. Know that you can't control the priorities and perceptions of others. You can't help it if what's important to you isn't important to them.

If you don't hear back from someone after three voicemails, e-mails or direct mail attempts, it's probably time to walk away. Interestingly, you may discover that when you stop trying to reach one individual and focus on someone else, the first person will actually call you. Sometimes, it just comes down to timing. You can't control when it's a good time for someone to contact you.

Occasionally, your contacts will resist your efforts to meet them with statements, such as, "I don't have time to meet with you" or "I can't help you." This may be a sign that they have a lot on their plates and can't commit to another task. Reassure them that you understand they're very busy with a lot of demands, and let them know you respect their ability to say "no." Do *not* push the issue. Instead, invite them to contact you down the road when they have time, and let them know how *you* could be of value to them. Always keep the door open. After all, a "no" sometimes means "not now."

At this point, you probably realize that you'll need some sort of organizational tool to track all contacts, results and follow-ups. Each person you talk to might lead you to another person or another course of action. You'll also want to track when to follow up with your contacts and thank them, update them or pass on helpful information. You can do this in a number of formats: a list, a table, a spreadsheet or a database.

Regardless of the format, the table that follows provides the basic information that you need to track. The first row presents generic information, and the second row gives you examples.

Keep Track of Contacts				
Contact Info	Referred by	First Contact	Follow-up Actions	Comments
Name, Title Company Expertise E-mail Phone Web site Address	Name of Referral	Date How Contacted	Date Action and results	Notes on person
Maria Rosa, Technical Writer InfoDex Technical, marketing and educational writing Maria.rosa@ infodex.com (000)555-1212 www.infodex.com 2001 Odyssey Way Anytown, MO ZIP	James Olivera, InfoDex	09-01-20XX Phone Seemed happy to chat and interested in an info. interview	09-02-20XX Sent thank-you/ confirmation e-mail 09-07-20XX To Do: Hold info. interview at Happy Café downtown	

When you network, it may feel like you're looking for a needle in a haystack. But, focus on your goals, and you're certain to find several golden needles in the haystack!

Practice!

Throughout this section, you heard us say that it's normal to feel nervous as you network. That's because people tend to worry about rejection and what others think of them. The truth is that we all imagine the worst when we try something new like networking. In reality, the worst rarely happens, and most people think well of us. The more you network, the less nervous you'll feel. Eventually, you lose the few butterflies in your stomach and feel excited!

Just remember that networking during a job hunt is a great chance to learn new people skills—how to connect with others, how to build rapport and how to find commonality. These are all important skills in your daily life. In reality, networking is absolutely essential if you want to find a job, keep a job and build a thriving career.

If you're nervous about networking, practice with people you know. Tell them in advance that networking is crucial to the success of your job hunt. Ask them if they could spend a little time with you to fine-tune your networking skills. Mention that you want to practice asking and responding to questions just like you would in a networking meeting.

When you practice with people you know, you'll comfortably make small talk about people and things you have in common. Then, find a way to naturally transition between your comfortable small talk and your statement of purpose for the conversation—your career transition and job-hunt needs. Start to ask questions, and listen to the responses. At the end, ask your friends for feedback: Did you communicate clearly? Did you get your needs across effectively? Did you describe your strengths and abilities succinctly?

Shy folks often find that their voices get softer and higher pitched when they're nervous. They may also speak faster. If you're on the shy side, practice speaking with a strong and confident voice—speak up and slow down.

Your presentation and communication style make an impression on others. They reflect how you value yourself. You want people to walk away thinking you're a confident, capable person who is courageous and smart to reach out and network.

Now, it's time for another exercise before we wrap up this section.



The more you network, the less nervous you'll feel. Eventually, you lose the few butterflies in your stomach and feel excited!

Exercise 5

Answer the following on a separate piece of paper.

1. **Let's begin with some practice in writing a phone script. Write a script for a situation in which you have a decision-maker on the phone. For example, let's say you submitted a resume for a posted opening. Now you're following up to see if the decision-maker received your resume and to inquire about the steps in the hiring process. What would you say?**
2. **Now's your chance to create a job-hunt strategy and action plan, as well as prepare for some real networking calls. What is your job-hunt goal?**
3. **What actions can you take to successfully achieve your goal? (Refer to the techniques and methods that we shared.)**
4. **Review your list of actions in your job-hunt strategy. What actions do you feel will best meet your needs?**
5. **Break those actions into individual tasks. List the tasks.**
6. **Identify daily, weekly, monthly and ongoing tasks.**
7. **Create your job-hunt calendar, and plug in all the tasks you want to do.**
8. **Build a list of the tools and supplies you'll need to be successful in your job hunt.**
9. **Write yourself an introduction to use on the phone. Show different responses for each of the following scenarios.**
 - ➔ **Scenario #1: The person you're talking to says that she doesn't have time to meet with you.**
 - ➔ **Scenario #2: The person you're talking to says that her company doesn't have any openings right now.**
 - ➔ **Scenario #3: The person you're talking to says, "Tell me about yourself."**

Review Exercise 5

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Summary

This section dove into the nitty-gritty of your job hunt. You should now be ready to take a proactive approach to find a job. You are armed with your Top 10 contact list, elevator speech and various organizational tools!

As you continue to network, you'll find the tips that we provided will come in handy as you introduce yourself (in person, by phone or by e-mail), leave messages, follow up and track your contacts. You're set to leave a positive impression wherever you go!

In the next section, we'll get to work on your resume and cover letter. However, before you move on, be sure to review what you learned about planning and conducting your job hunt.



You're set to leave a
positive impression
wherever you go!

Section 4

Put It on Paper

Learning Objectives

1. Determine your target market and the most effective marketing collateral for it.
2. Examine the different types of resumes, and choose a style that best fits your career goals.
3. Construct a resume that reflects your accomplishments, skills, abilities, experience, attitude and goals or objectives.
4. Write an effective cover letter and letter of introduction.
5. Write an effective thank-you letter.
6. Foster good professional references.

Introduction

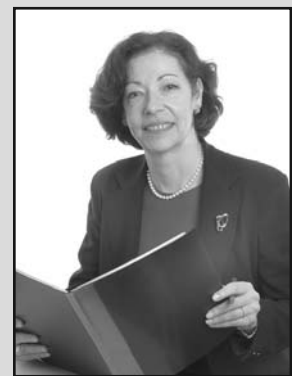
Congratulations! You already took some key steps in your job hunt. You identified the type of work you want to pursue and possible employers. You networked to learn more about those careers and the job market. You even started to formulate a plan of action. Now, it's time to develop a professional image on paper and market yourself with a professional letter of introduction, resume, cover letter and references.

Let's take a look at how one person has put together marketing materials for her job hunt.

So far, Jessica's done all the right things as she prepares to re-enter the workforce. Before she took time off to raise her daughter, she was employed as a medical office administrator and enjoyed the work very much. In addition, she has completed a course in medical claims and billing and is interested in a job that will utilize those skills, as well.

She's now at the stage where she's developing her own marketing materials, such as her letter of introduction, resume and cover letter, to promote her abilities and experience. Jessica sends her letter of introduction to medical offices in her area—tweaking each letter slightly based on the needs of the office. Then, she follows up with each office about a week after sending the letter to further network or set up an interview.

Continued—



Get ready to put together marketing materials for your job hunt!

Jessica's also made some great contacts who steered her to employers with openings in their offices. As Jessica works on her resume, she asks for feedback from her professional contacts and incorporates their suggestions. In the process, she develops two versions of her resume—one that spotlights her education and training in medical billing and another that highlights her previous experience in the medical field as an office administrator. She can use the resume that best fits each job that she applies for.

When Jessica runs across a job opening, she further researches the medical office listing the opening. Then, she tweaks her resume and cover letter to reflect the needs of the office. As you can see, Jessica is on her way to landing a great job!

Jessica did a good job of marketing herself. Now, let's look at how you might apply some of the same techniques to your job hunt.

Self-marketing

The job market can be so competitive! How can you set yourself apart from other applicants if an employer receives dozens of resumes for a single job opening? How professional are the letters of introduction, resumes, cover letters, thank-you notes, e-mails, phone messages and faxes that you submit to an employer? Are your values and characteristics in line with those of the employer? What's your reputation in the professional world? Do your background, experience, skills and accomplishments demonstrate that you have what it takes to help a company succeed? These are big questions.

To clearly communicate your value to a company or office, you must learn to market yourself. Many people find that the hardest thing to do during a job hunt is to "toot their own horn." Few people feel comfortable promoting themselves, yet most people feel fine talking about others they admire. That's because schools and parents rarely teach the fine art of self-promotion. However, it's crucial to your success that you talk about yourself and your accomplishments. If you're uncomfortable doing so, try to think of yourself as another person. Then, practice talking about this person as if she were not you.



Many people find that the hardest thing to do during a job hunt is to "toot their own horn."

For example, suppose your name is Jean. You know that people have commented on your multi-tasking and organizational skills. To start, you might say some things about yourself in the third person:

- ➔ “Jean’s ability to juggle multiple projects and keep things organized really impresses me. She stays calm, cool and collected under pressure.”

You should be able to do this easily. Repeat the statements a few times until they feel natural, and you’ll feel quite comfortable with Jean’s (your) accomplishments. Now, repeat the statements, but use “I.”

- ➔ “I’m able to juggle multiple projects and keep things organized. No matter what, I stay calm, cool and collected under pressure.”



Companies market the latest cell phones and accessories to teenagers and health products to baby boomers.

These are excellent statements that you can make to potential employers because you come across as confident and self-assured, not arrogant or superior. The act of promoting yourself is called **self-marketing**. In the business world, **marketing** is used to promote a product or a service to a particular audience, called the target market.

All you have to do is watch a few minutes of television commercials to understand this principle. For example, companies market the latest cell phones to teenagers and health products to baby boomers. The commercials target their intended audiences through a strategic combination of words and images.

This same principle applies to your job search! Now that you have successfully identified the jobs or careers that you want to pursue and have your professional image under control, you’re ready to embark on a marketing campaign. During this campaign, you’ll target the people and employers you identified who can help you achieve your career goals. Then, you’ll promote yourself to them.

Once you know your target market—its motivations, frustrations and work activities—think about how you’re going to approach it, the type of communication you’ll use to reach it and what you’re going to say. These details become your personal marketing plan.

Personal Marketing Plan

Your **personal marketing plan** is the information that you need to provide and the actions that you need to take to promote yourself to your target audience. Before you think about the plan, make sure you’re clear on your career goals, what job-hunt methods will work best for you and who your target audience is. With these pieces in place, you’re ready to ask yourself some key questions.

1. What is my unique value to an employer—what is it I bring to the table that no one else does?
2. What type of problems can I solve for an employer?
3. What is the fundamental message about myself I want to communicate to a potential employer?
4. How many hours a week can I spend on my marketing plan?
5. What materials do I need to promote myself most effectively?
6. What is the biggest obstacle to my personal marketing plan, and how can I overcome it?
7. How can I get more comfortable as I talk about myself and what I have to offer to an employer?



Before you think about your personal marketing plan, make sure you're clear on your career goals, what job-hunt methods will work best for you and who your target audience is.



Life is busy! You may not have a lot of time to devote to implementing your self-marketing plan.

Life is busy! You may not have a lot of time to devote to implementing your self-marketing plan. Nonetheless, find a way to take an action step each day, even if it is a small one. All of these small steps add up to your successful self-promotion.

Now, let's look at materials you'll want to develop to help you promote yourself before, during and after you meet your target market.

Marketing Collateral

Marketing collateral refers to the materials a business uses to market itself. For example, a small Web design business might have a collection of marketing materials that it distributes to customers and potential customers. Its marketing collateral might consist of business cards, a brochure that explains the company's services and products, its own Web site, business flyers that promote discounts or specials and folders that contain more specific service and product information.

Your marketing collateral consists of materials that you distribute to your target market during your personal marketing campaign. For example, your marketing collateral might consist of:

- ➔ **Letter of introduction:** An introductory letter about yourself and your qualifications.
- ➔ **Resume:** A one- to two-page document that summarizes your career experience and relevant skills.
- ➔ **Cover letter:** A letter that accompanies your resume and details how you're uniquely qualified for the position you're pursuing.
- ➔ **References:** A list of professional references. These are people who can talk about your work abilities and character and provide you with written letters of recommendation. You can also list their contact information and provide it to employers when appropriate.
- ➔ **Your elevator speech:** Remember that this is a short verbal piece of marketing collateral that you can use when you meet someone for the first time.



Your elevator speech is part of your marketing collateral.

Consider each of these items as an effective tool for self-promotion. There's an appropriate time and place for each one.

Letter of Introduction, Resume and Cover Letter— What to Use and When?

In a moment, we'll discuss the letter of introduction. Then, we will tackle resumes and cover letters. You might be wondering when to use all of these pieces of marketing collateral. Do you send them all together? Only send your resume? Well, each item has its place and its purpose.

It's likely that you'll send your resume and cover letter to businesses when you apply for *specific* job openings. For example, if you want to apply for the entry-level security guard position at Safety First, you'll tailor your cover letter and resume to the job posting, and send them to the hiring manager.

As a recent graduate, it's true that you may not have a lot of experience in your chosen field. Do not worry. You are well-trained and qualified for entry-level positions. However, if you blindly send a resume and cover letter to every business that interests you in your area, you might not get much of a response—especially if your resume and cover letter mention that you're new to the field or portray your lack of experience.

This is where your letter of introduction comes in handy. We'll talk more about this letter and how to use it to your advantage now.

Letter of Introduction

Your letter of introduction will be one of the most important tools you will use in your search for employers. You should prepare a letter introducing yourself and your skills to local businesses, companies and offices in your chosen field.

Your letter should be brief, business-like and positive. Focus on what you can do for the people you will work with. Don't express any lack of confidence in your letter. Don't announce that you are new to the field. Most people scan their mail quickly and make rapid decisions about what they are reading.

People will form their first impressions of you from your letter. If you state that your career choice is new to you, the reader may make an immediate negative judgment. The person may doubt your ability to do a good job. You know you can do the work, but you might not get the chance to prove it if the person forms a negative impression of you. The goal of your letter is to catch the reader's interest and leave a positive impression.

Following are two sample letters of introduction.

SARAH WOODWARD

2761 Elm Drive
Hampshire, Pennsylvania 19062
(814) 555-1234

January 18, 20XX

Nancy James
Physicians' Emergency Clinic
2181 Meridian Street, Suite 30
Hampshire, Pennsylvania 19067

Dear Ms. James:

I am a medical transcriptionist in this area, and I am writing to offer my services. I would enjoy working for a clinic that needs an MT who is fast, accurate and ready to hit the ground running.

Through in-depth training and professional experience, I am experienced in all medical specialties and types of reports. I also have a good understanding of medical terminology, anatomy and physiology.

Please feel free to pass my contact information to any of your colleagues who might need a medical transcriptionist. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss your current needs and answer any questions that you might have. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Woodward

Sarah Woodward

Matthew Smith

556 Marks Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 00094
(734) 555-7314
September 20, 20XX

Peggy Beck
Maple Leaf Clinic
1020 Derbyshire Lane
Bismarck, North Dakota 15563

Dear Ms. Beck:

Susie Cavanaugh suggested that I contact you. I understand that the medical practice that you manage has experienced a growing caseload and some staff turnover. As a trained medical transcriptionist, I would be happy to fill in when members of your staff take vacation time. I could also provide overflow relief for your staff or full transcription services whenever needed.

Thanks to in-depth training and professional experience, I am skilled in many areas of medical transcription. I am prepared to transcribe your reports promptly and with the highest degree of accuracy.

To see if I can be of assistance to you and your practice, I'll call next week to follow up on this letter and to answer any questions. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Matthew Smith

Matthew Smith

Contact Prospective Employers

Once you prepare your introductory letter, you're ready to begin contacting places of employment that interest you. Here are the steps you should take.

Send Letters—Make a list of potential clients, and mail or hand deliver a letter of introduction to each individual or facility on the list. For example, as a medical assistant, your list of possible places of employment might include local:

For example, as a medical transcriptionist, your list of possible places of employment might include local:

- ➔ Doctors' offices, clinics, laboratories and other healthcare sites, such as mental-health clinics, pain management centers and chiropractors' offices. These places all fall into the category of outpatient facilities. Some of these facilities prefer to have an off-site transcriptionist do their transcription. Some smaller doctors' offices and other healthcare sites do not generate enough work to hire a full-time, on-site transcriptionist. Even if they have enough work, it can be more convenient and economical for them to send the work out. That way they don't have to provide equipment and space for a transcriptionist.
- ➔ Transcription services that contract with hospitals and outpatient facilities to provide transcription. These services then hire medical transcriptionists as employees or subcontractors to complete this work.
- ➔ Hospitals that have in-house (on-site) transcription departments that are responsible for transcribing the reports that staff physicians dictate. Some hospitals use home-based transcriptionists for part of this work. When the on-site transcription department begins to get backlogged, lower-priority work is sent out as overflow. A hospital will generally contract with a transcription service or an individual, off-site transcriptionist for this overflow work.

In addition to the more traditional places of employment for MTs, you might examine the following:

- ➔ Temporary employment services
- ➔ Secretarial services
- ➔ Law offices that specialize in personal injury litigation
- ➔ The coroner's office
- ➔ The county health department
- ➔ Agencies offering clerical support to medical students

Set a goal to deliver 10 letters per week. Once you've started this habit, make a commitment to mail five to 10 letters per week to potential employers.

Keep a copy of the letter you sent or a note about what you said in the letter to help you make a connection when you follow up with facilities.

A Word about Accuracy—Remember that you are introducing yourself to people you hope will soon hire you. It is critical to make a good impression. Make sure that your letters are well written and completely free of any errors. Have a friend proofread for you, too. Whenever possible, send your information to a specific person. Know and use the correct spelling of that person’s name and title. Call ahead, and ask for the name of the hiring manager or office administrator.

Track Contacts—Keep a record of all potential employers you contact. For each individual you mail a letter to or otherwise contact, make a note of the date you mailed the letter (or made a phone call, or visited). Also note the date of your follow-up phone call and the dates of any other contacts. Keep a record of what was said. This complete record of contacts with potential employers will enable you to organize your marketing efforts and track your progress.

Make Follow-up Phone Calls—Follow up each letter with a phone call within a week. Explain to the person you talk with that you’re calling to make sure she received your letter and to inquire about the company’s need for your services. It’s important that you sound confident and professional on the phone. Smile and sit up straight during this contact. Even though she can’t see you, this helps send a positive, friendly attitude. Present yourself as a professional. Remember, it would take you at least a year of on-the-job training to develop the knowledge you acquired during your course, so you are experienced and qualified for an entry-level position.

It’s natural for people to feel uncertain about someone who is new to a field, so it’s up to you to give the right impression. Here’s an example of what you might say when you make a follow-up call:

“Hello, my name is _____. I’m a medical assistant. I’m calling to see if you received my recent letter.”

(If the person didn’t receive it, offer to send another and then go on with your call.)

“Do you have any vacations to cover in the near future?” “Do you have a need for a medical assistant at this time?”

If the person you talk to expresses an interest in you, set an appointment to meet with her at her office. If your services are not needed, ask her if she can recommend anyone who might be interested in your services. Then, suggest that she keep your contact information for future reference, as well as pass it along to others if she hears of someone who might need your assistance.

Continue to take these steps until you are able to book interviews!

Now that you have a firm understanding of the letter of introduction and its use, let’s move on to another piece of marketing collateral—the resume.

You and Your Resume

A resume is a one- or two-page summary of your skills, education, accomplishments and experience. You must be able to summarize this information concisely in two pages or less because an employer does not have time to read through everything you've done during your entire career. Besides, the purpose of the resume is to get an employer interested so he'll call you for an interview. You need to provide just enough information and details to convey that you're qualified and capable. During the interview, you can tell the employer about the information you didn't include in the resume.

By the way, did you know that the average resume gets only about 15 seconds of initial attention? That's another reason to keep your resume concise—so employers can quickly scan it and get the information they need in a few seconds. It's vital to organize your resume so that the most important information is at the beginning. That way, if an employer only has time to glance at the first half of a page, she has the information that she needs.

When you submit your resume to employers, you become a candidate for hiring—someone who's competing for a position, just like a candidate for political office. The employer will examine what you have to offer to determine if you're a match for its needs. Typically, the employer will evaluate your skills, experience and training against those that the position requires.

Your resume is usually one of the first impressions your potential employer has of you. You want your resume to stand out against the dozens of others that the employer may have received. The best way to do this is to make sure the resume gives a solid idea of why *you* would be more valuable to the company than anyone else.

The Resume Process

There's a process to prepare your resume! Get ready to do some deep thinking and soul-searching if you've never created a resume. Don't expect to "crank it out" in one sitting. And, if you already have a resume but know that it needs some changes, take adequate time to review and update it. An employer can tell when you haven't paid attention to details!

Before you begin your resume, ask yourself some important questions: What is my employment goal? What skills do I have that can help a company? What accomplishments am I most proud of? Where do my interests lie? What jobs have I held in the past, and how did I use my skills in those jobs? If you have trouble answering these questions, turn to co-workers, friends or family members for input. Once you put your resume together, ask trusted friends, colleagues or professional contacts to review it. At this point, you can incorporate any feedback you get, and finalize the resume. Ultimately, *you* are responsible for the finished product.



Did you know that the average resume gets only about 15 seconds of initial attention?



Don't expect to "crank out" your resume in one sitting.

We're going to look at different types of resumes in the next section, but, first, take a look at what your resume should be.

Your resume should be:

- ➔ **An honest reflection of who you are and what you have done.** You need to feel comfortable talking about anything you mention in your resume.
- ➔ **A communication tool to respond to job openings or pursue employment opportunities.** A resume is an accepted way to present yourself on paper to an employer.
- ➔ **Your “talk sheet” during an interview.** Your resume can jog your memory and remind you of your accomplishments so that you can expand on them during the interview.
- ➔ **An item to distribute to key job-hunting contacts and professional references.** It will help to remind them of your background and skills.
- ➔ **An item to accompany a job application.** Once you fill out an application, you can provide your resume to show your qualifications.
- ➔ **A way to clarify what you can do.** Explain your strengths, skills and accomplishments and possible career directions.



Your resume should be something to distribute to key job-hunting contacts and professional references to remind them of your background and skills.



As long as you work, you'll continually update and add to your resume.

- ➔ **A summary customized for the type of employment that you seek.** Your resume will always include statements about what you've done in the past, but it should also focus on what you want to do next and the job you're applying for. What can you say about yourself that will make an employer think that you're the one for the job? This likely will change for each employer, so you might have to revise your resume and send different versions for different jobs.
- ➔ **A way to boost your self-confidence.** There's nothing like reading your own resume and thinking, “Wow, I did all that? That's pretty good!” This self-confidence helps you feel more comfortable as you communicate your accomplishments and marketable qualities to others. When your resume is complete, you can say, “Hey, I look good on paper!”
- ➔ **A “work in progress.”** As long as you work, you'll continually update and add to your resume. Save each version of your resume as you travel your career path to capture your key accomplishments along the way.

Now, let's look at the different types of resumes you might want to create.

Types of Resumes

There are three common types of resumes: chronological, functional and combination. Each one has similar information but presents the content in a different way. While the functional resume is probably the most effective, all three have their time, place and advantages. Consider which format would work best for your situation and career goals after you read about each type and review the examples.

Chronological

The information in a **chronological resume** is organized by job history. The resume lists your jobs in the order that you held them, from the present to the past. Each job description includes the important tasks you performed, skills you displayed and your accomplishments. As you move back in time, you generally include less information about each job.

This is a widely used format that is easy to scan. The reader can quickly see how your career has progressed through time, what changes you made and what skills you gained. One downside of this format is that it shows gaps in your employment history, such as time off to raise a family or various periods of layoffs or career transitions.

However, you can fill these gaps with information about personal, volunteer or freelance work. Another downside to a chronological resume is that important skills or accomplishments may get buried or lost as the resume moves back in time.

The chronological resume is great for people with a steady work record and a career history that relates directly to the position to which they are applying.

Following are examples of a chronological resume.

Sam Morgan

5937 Winter Lane, Medford, California 96630

583-555-3432

Sammorgan@3.net

QUALIFICATIONS

- More than eight years of medical transcription experience.
- Experience in transcribing and editing reports in all medical specialties.
- Knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy and physiology.
- Proficient use of correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Strong organization skills with attention to detail.
- Excellent communication and customer service skills.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Medical Transcriptionist, L.A. Family Medicine, Los Angeles, CA

2009 – present

- Transcribe reports in an accurate and timely manner.
- Edit, format and correct reports dictated to a speech-recognition system.
- Apply proper management and confidentiality to patient medical records.
- Familiar with the features and functions of EHRs and how EHRs impact medical transcription.

Medical Transcriptionist, L.A. Orthopedic Center, Los Angeles, CA

2006 – 2009

- Transcribed reports in an accurate and timely manner.
- Applied proper management and confidentiality to patient medical records.
- Used Microsoft Word and other computer skills in daily work.

Front Office Receptionist, Riverside MRI Services, Riverside, CA

2004 – 2006

- Answered phones and greeted patients.
- Performed triage for patients.
- Prepared, filed and routed medical records.
- Verified insurance and pre-certification.
- Worked closely with medical personnel and medical facilities.
- Scheduled MRI scans for patients.

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

- Medical Transcription Course, U.S. Career Institute, Fort Collins, CO
- Life Sciences Course, Riverside Community College, Riverside, CA
- Diploma, Rivendale High School, Riverside, CA

Curt Miller

49 April Street
 Aurora, CO 58735
 Miller1@riker.com
 282-555-7676

“Self-motivated, very diverse perfectionist who thrives on challenge.”

Employment History

Medical Front Office Receptionist Broomfield Blood Bank, Broomfield, CO	09/2009 to Present
Activity Assistant for Independent Living and Assisted Living Units Mountain Pines Retirement Home, Pueblo West, CO	09/2006 to 08/2009
Medical Data Entry D.E.I.S. Corporation, Englewood, CO	02/2004 to 09/2006
Shoppin’ Bag, Aurora, CO Cashier	05/2001 to 12/2003

Education

U.S. Career Institute	Medical Transcription Course
Gateway High School, Aurora, CO	High School Diploma

Community Service

Broomfield Food Bank Volunteer	06/2009 to Present
Boy Scouts Troop Leader	08/2003 to 07/2006

Functional

The information in a **functional resume** is organized by skill set rather than job history. This type of resume takes the skills and accomplishments from your entire career history (and any personal experience that directly relates) from the body of the chronological resume and features them prominently. A functional resume also incorporates skills and achievements from activities beyond employment, such as volunteer work and internships. The functional style works well for people with gaps in their work history or frequent job changes because it focuses on what skills they have, not whom they worked for or when.

Following are examples of a functional resume.

Brady Petrovski

222 Barker Road Apt. 18C, Canton, Oklahoma 73624

795 (555) 4150

Bpetrovski29@gmail.com

Objective: To obtain a job in the field of Medical Transcription.

Summary of Qualifications

- Experience in transcribing reports in all medical specialties.
- Excellent knowledge of clerical and computer skills, including experience with Word and Outlook.
- Strong communication skills and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to multi-task and problem-solve.
- Strong technical skills, including Internet navigation and research.

Areas of Expertise

- Transcribe reports in an accurate and timely manner.
- Apply proper management and confidentiality to patient medical records.
- Use Microsoft Word and other computer skills in daily work.
- Strong knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy and physiology.
- Outstanding organizational skills with attention to detail.
- Proficient use of correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Accomplishments

Medical Transcription Certificate	U.S. Career Institute	2009
Certified Medical Transcriptionist	National Healthcareer Association	2010

Lacey Elmer
847 Ivy Court Apt. 1A
Sac City, Iowa 44466
888.555.1111
LKElmer@iccc.edu

Objective

To rejoin the workforce and obtain a part-time Medical Transcription job after two years as a stay-at-home mom.

Qualifications

Dependable, multi-tasking individual with more than eight years of success in managerial duties and administrative support. Excellent customer service and computer skills, including Microsoft Office. Able to quickly adapt to changes and “think on my feet.” Assertive, outgoing professional; proven ability to work independently and handle simultaneous projects; skilled in problem-solving and troubleshooting.

Relevant Experience

Problem-solving, Organization and Accuracy

- Adept at multi-tasking while assisting the president of a small appraisal company.
- Created and edited a company newsletter to foster employee unity.
- Responded in a timely manner to customer inquiries concerning appraisal process.
- Managed both electronic and paper company files.

Customer Relations

- Handled inquiries from general public concerning college enrollment, courses and events.
- Answered questions from instructors, students and office staff.
- Daily contact with appraisers, office staff, assessors, planning and zoning and HOA companies.
- Utilized excellent customer service and sales skills while delivering real estate appraisals.

Management

- Excelled as president’s assistant for a company of 15+ employees, performing all tasks and completing all projects according to her specifications.
- Supervised day-to-day activities of a distance-learning center.
- Dealt with technical issues with computer equipment.
- Successfully managed eight appraisers while completing data entry work.

Computer Usage

- Skilled in Microsoft Office, Internet and Search Engines.

Data Entry Skills

- 10+ years of data entry, including reports, letters, billing, invoicing and extremely detailed appraisals with 100% accuracy.
- Typing skills of 50 wpm.

Employment

Research/Data Entry	Residential Appraisal Headquarters, Inc., Windsor, Colorado	09/2005 – 11/2008
President’s Assistant	Appraisal Headquarters, Inc., Windsor, Colorado	03/2003 – 09/2005
On-Site Manager	Iowa Central Community College, Sac City, Iowa	05/1999 – 02/2003

Education

Medical Transcription Certificate	USCI	Fort Collins, CO
High School Diploma	Regional High School	Sac City, IA

Combination

A **combination resume** includes both a detailed job history and a section that highlights your skills. It lists skills first and follows with a detailed work history that goes backward in time. This resume style takes the focus away from gaps in employment or lack of experience and puts the attention where it belongs—on your skills and accomplishments.

A combination resume is a good fit for people re-entering the job market after a long period of absence or for people looking for work that is different from what they've done in the past. However, this format requires more effort to create, and if it's not done carefully, it can confuse the reader.

Following are examples of a combination resume.

Rowan Cramer

94 SW Street, Cala, Ohio 42355

Rowansmail@nch.net

101-555-6673

Medical Transcription

Professional Summary

- Timely, accurate transcription in all medical specialties and types of reports.
- Proficient computer and typing skills.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Skilled at handling correspondence.
- Knowledgeable of HIPAA and Joint Commission standards.

Areas of Expertise

- Transcribe and edit medical reports.
- Apply medical terminology, anatomy and physiology knowledge.
- Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Provide excellent customer service.
- Apply proper management and confidentiality to patient medical records.
- Problem-solve and multi-task.

Career Accomplishments

- Medical Transcription Certificate through U.S. Career Institute.
- Certified Medical Transcriptionist through the National Healthcareer Association.

Zak Trainer

8483 Woodward Avenue | Jacksonville, Florida 66384 | 791.555.6937 | ZakTrainer1224@yahoo.com

Medical Transcription Knowledge

Proven knowledge of medical transcription. Areas of expertise and strengths include:

- ✓ Transcription in all medical specialties and report types
- ✓ Grammar, spelling and punctuation
- ✓ Anatomy and physiology
- ✓ Medical terminology
- ✓ Computer skills
- ✓ HIPAA and Joint Commission standards
- ✓ Medical records management
- ✓ Leadership training
- ✓ Problem-solving
- ✓ Supervisory skills
- ✓ Multi-tasking
- ✓ Organization and planning

Well organized and focused when managing multiple projects; a go-getter willing to go the extra mile who won't quit until the job is perfect and complete. Remarkable ability to communicate within all levels of an organization and work effectively through difficult and confidential matters. Experienced in customer relations; able to work independently.

Selected Accomplishments

- Successfully graduated from USCI's Medical Transcription Course with a 3.9 GPA.
- Registered Medical Transcriptionist through the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity.
- Successfully completed first-aid training.
- Graduate of Jacksonville Leadership Council's Leadership Training.

Career History

Customer Service Specialist/Supervisor	Weston Wireless	2008-present
Customer Service Representative	Weston Wireless	2005-2008
Call Center Agent	ABC Call Center	2000-2004

Academic Credentials

Ongoing Professional Development and Certifications

- Registered Medical Transcriptionist through the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity 2010.
- Red Cross First-aid Training 2010
- Leadership Training Jacksonville Leadership Council 2009
- Membership American Management Association (AMA) 2008

Education

- Medical Transcription Certificate USCI 2010
- Diploma Jacksonville High School 1999

The Contents of Your Resume

Now that you're familiar with the different types of resumes, let's look at what actually goes into your resume. Depending on the resume format that you select, your resume will contain much of this basic information in the order that follows:

1. **Your contact information:** This appears as a header at the top of your resume. It includes your name, address, phone number and e-mail address. Change your e-mail address if the one you use currently is too personal or silly. Many people establish a new e-mail account just for their job hunt.
2. **Objective:** This statement appears at the top of the resume below your contact information. It helps your reader quickly identify the kind of job opportunity you seek. If you give your resume to someone in a networking situation, the objective can be quite helpful. When the individual returns to his office, he may not remember the type of position you want, but the job objective at the top of your resume will quickly remind him. If you apply for a specific job opening, include the job title or position in your objective. This helps Human Resources or the person who collects resumes to quickly identify the job you're applying for and put your resume in the appropriate file. For example, appropriate objectives in this situation might be any one of the following:

- ➔ Obtain a position as a legal secretary in real estate law.
- ➔ Seek an office administrator position in a non-profit agency offering opportunity for professional growth.
- ➔ Obtain a position as Assistant Bookkeeper for Flynn's Pet Shop.

If you're not applying for a specific job, your objective should indicate the type of work you want to do. A good objective in this situation might be:

- ➔ Care for, coach, teach or tutor children of all ages at school, daycare or in the home.

In this case, the objective clearly conveys the idea that you want to work with children and shows you're comfortable in a number of settings and situations. So, if any positions that work with children are available, your resume is ready and waiting!

3. **Qualifications summary:** This is a short paragraph or list of bulleted items at the top of your resume that summarizes your experience, **soft skills** (personality traits and characteristics needed for the job) and **technical skills** (trades) relevant to the job. Customize this summary for every resume to match the employer's needs. Do *not* use a generic summary—the employer will recognize you didn't spend time personalizing it and will screen you out. An appropriate qualifications summary might be:



If you apply for a specific job opening, include the job title or position in your objective.

- ➔ More than 10 years of experience in criminal justice, including four years of experience as a private investigator.
 - ➔ Highly skilled at handling multiple client requests in an efficient and accurate manner while providing personal and exceptional service as a wedding and event planner.
4. **List of your past employers and the tasks you performed for them:**
 This includes the job title you held, the company’s name and location and the dates you worked for the company. Dates should be in the form of years; you do *not* have to include month or day of month. For example, if you worked for ABC Manufacturing from May 1, 2005 to June 30, 2010, your resume can state, “2005-2010.” Include part-time or volunteer jobs or personal projects if they are relevant to the job you’re applying for. If a past job doesn’t relate to the job you’re applying for but it fills a gap in time, include it.
5. **Education:** List your high school and any certification or training courses that you completed. If you graduated from college, include the degree, name and location of the school and year you received your degree. If you did not graduate from college (or complete a certificate course) but took some college-level courses (or completed some of a certification course), include a statement such as, “Completed coursework in business administration, Smithtown Community College, Smithtown, New York, 2006-2007.”

In addition to these basic categories, you can include any of the following optional information in your resume: skill headings, certifications, awards, professional development and leadership. We discuss each of the optional items in more detail in the following sections.

Skill Headings

When you choose a functional or combination resume format, you might use skill headings to categorize your abilities and experience. Choose headings that are appropriate for the position that you’re applying for. Under each heading, include several statements that support the heading. This is a great way to present your background and show that it directly matches the employer’s needs. Do not use more than three headings.

Here are some examples of possible skill headings:

Planning	Presentations	Staff Development
Fund-raising	Problem-solving	Supervision
Innovation	Project Management	Teaching
Instruction	Promotions	Teamwork
Management	Public Speaking	Technical Skills
Organizational Skills		



Soft skills are personality traits and characteristics needed for a job.

An example of skills headings for a person seeking an office administrator position follows.

Office Management

- Initiated new recordkeeping techniques that decreased filing time by 50 percent.
- Managed phone system with 35 lines and 12 extensions without complication.
- Recorded customer-contact data in daily telephone log.

Customer Relations

- Processed about 120 telephone calls on daily basis.
- Responded to customer comments, and resolved or referred all customer complaints within 24 hours.
- Clearly communicated office protocol to staff and customers.

Certifications

Do you have any professional certifications? If so, you can create a section on your resume to specifically highlight them. These certifications might include training programs in soft skills (conflict resolution, project management or supervisory skills) or technical skills (Web design, radiology). Be sure to include the date you achieved the certification.

An example of a certifications section follows.

Certifications

- Certified, Project Management Professional (PMP), Project Management Institute 2010
- Certified First Aid and CPR, American Red Cross 2008



Do you have any professional certifications? If so, you can create a section on your resume to specifically highlight these certifications.

Awards and Recognition

If a field that you worked in recognized you, your team or your company for past work, create a section for these awards. Always include the year you received the award. These awards are also worth mentioning in the qualifications summary section of your resume or in your cover letter if they're relevant to the job you are applying for.

An example of an awards section follows.

Awards and Recognition	
➔ Employee of the Month, ABC Manufacturing	2010
➔ Volunteer of the Month, Kiwanis Club of Smithtown	2009

Professional Development

Professional development refers to activities that you participate in for personal and business growth. They demonstrate to the employer that you are involved with activities that are outside of work or that are associated with your job. This shows that you're proactive in managing yourself and your career. Such activities might include membership in a club, volunteering on a committee or nonprofit work. This section can also include any seminars, workshops or specific on-the-job training you've completed.



Professional development activities might include membership in a club, volunteering on a committee or nonprofit work.

An example of a professional development section follows.

Professional Development	
➔ Treasurer, Kappa Alpha Theta, Smithtown Chapter	2006-2008
➔ Member, Rotary Club of Smithtown	2000-present
➔ Fundraising committee member, United Way, Smithtown	2007-present
➔ Graduate, Leadership Smithtown, Smithtown Chamber of Commerce	2009
➔ Attended professional development courses including: Situational Leadership, Authentic Communication, Getting the Most from Your Employees	2005-2010

Leadership

Create a section to highlight any leadership activities you participated in through your community or at work.

An example of a leadership section follows.

Leadership	
➔ President, Rotary Club of Smithtown	2010
➔ Graduate, Leadership Smithtown, Smithtown Chamber of Commerce	2009
➔ Leader, Girl Scout Troop #23, Smithtown	2006-2008

That concludes the discussion of sections you might include in your resume. Now it's time to create your own resume.

Guidelines for a Great Resume

To begin your resume, follow these steps:

1. **Personal assessment:** Identify the skills you've acquired and the accomplishments you're proud of.
2. **Data sheet:** Type up detailed information about the jobs you've held, your education and anything else pertinent to your job hunt. This is information you can use when you create your resume. It includes:

- ➔ Title, dates and key responsibilities for each position
- ➔ Type of education and dates of completion
- ➔ Workshops attended
- ➔ Certifications acquired
- ➔ Volunteer activities completed

You may have to pull files from previous jobs that show your dates of employment. Look at your performance reviews from supervisors or managers. Review your previous jobs' descriptions.



Type up detailed information about the jobs you've held, your education and anything else pertinent to your job hunt.

If you have not kept this information, make a note to keep it in the future! It makes putting together a resume that much easier.

3. **Career objective:** Create an objective tailored for your job goal. If you decide to target two or three jobs, you'll probably have two or three different objectives and resumes.

4. **Resume format:** Choose the best resume format for you and your job-hunt goal.
5. **Organization:** Organize the information from your personal assessment and data sheet into the resume format that you chose. Insert the section headers that fit your situation (for example, objective, job history, professional development, education) to build your resume. Then, cut and paste information from your personal assessment and data sheet into the appropriate sections.

As you reviewed the resume samples that we presented, you probably noted that each one was unique—and we're not just talking about the format. It's fine for resumes to look dissimilar, have different headings and contain variable information. Remember to follow the key points we presented as you create your resume, and it will be great!

6. **Job responsibilities:** Expand upon every job you listed to include your responsibilities, the skills that you used and the results that you achieved. This is your chance to demonstrate tasks you performed in the past that directly relate to the job you're applying for.
 - ➔ Start each job responsibilities statement with an action verb. Do not repeat action or descriptive words.
 - ➔ Make sure the information you provide supports your ability to perform the job you're applying for.
 - ➔ Review and remove anything that is not related to your job goal.
7. **Target:** Organize your information in an order that shows how your work and life history have prepared you for this job. Doing so lets you target the job opening directly.
8. **Prioritize:** If you use a functional resume, prioritize the various skill sections to match the importance of the skills required for the job.
9. **Qualifications summary:** Compose an appropriate and powerful qualifications summary section based on the key pieces of the job description. What are the needs of the job? What are your three greatest strengths that meet those needs?
10. **Resume appearance:** Make your resume easy to scan and read. Use a standard font that is 10 to 12 points in size. Use appropriate white space, and avoid large blocks of text; otherwise, your resume looks too complicated and cluttered. Keep your sentences short, and use bullets when necessary. Make sure your resume does not exceed two pages—that's one page front and back or two pages single-sided.



Organize your resume information in an order that shows how your work and life history have prepared you for this job. Doing so lets you target the job opening directly.

Now, get ready to practice what you learned. Let's use the next exercise to put together the contents of your letter of introduction and resume.

Exercise 6

Complete the following on a separate piece of paper.

1. **Choose a local company, business or office to which you'd like to send a letter of introduction. Follow the example letters of introduction to create your own letter of introduction. However, do not copy these letters word for word. Instead, write a letter that expresses your personality and your understanding of the needs of the individual or firm you're writing to. After you write and revise the letter, type it or enter it on your computer. Be sure to proofread it carefully!**
2. **It's time to evaluate your professional image. What are the competencies and character traits you want to be known for?**
3. **What are the skills and accomplishments you're most proud of?**
4. **Now, let's collect some information for your resume. Remember to use your own words. First, what type of resume do you think will work best for you? Why?**
5. **Write down the section headings you want to include in your resume.**
6. **Identify the different jobs (paid or volunteer) you've held. Make sure you have the correct job titles, company names and dates. If you've been in the workforce for quite awhile, try to limit yourself to the work you've done in the last 10 years.**
7. **Include the primary tasks you performed at each job. Do not worry about using action verbs yet. Just get your ideas out.**
8. **Prepare a draft of your resume with contact information, an objective, qualifications summary, education, job history or skill categories and any other section headers that you chose.**

Review Exercise 6

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Polish Your Resume

Now that you have your rough resume, let's look at ways to make it as effective and powerful as possible, especially when it comes to the words you use, the skills you highlight and the accomplishments you present.



Polish your resume!

Keywords

A great resume features words that are key to the skills and abilities of the job you're applying for. Study the job posting to make sure you use some of its keywords in your resume. You want to match the words you use to describe your skills and abilities with those in the job posting. However, if you have no actual job posting or just a job title, you can use a variety of resources to research the job description and identify key words for your resume.

O*Net, America's Career InfoNet and the Occupational Outlook Handbook—which you already learned about—are all great sources. Professional associations, informational interviews, resume books and Web sites can also help.

Remember, some employers will store your resume in their database and search for certain key words based on the job they're trying to fill. Therefore, it's important to include appropriate keywords in your resume. Never include key words you have no experience with!

Soft Skills

Technical skills are important to an employer and important to include in your resume, but so are soft skills or personality traits. These are the characteristics that make you *you*! Many soft skills are desirable from an employer's perspective, so think about your own soft skills. How would you describe yourself? Which of your soft skills are important to the job or field you're pursuing?



Soft skills are the characteristics that make you *you*.

Here are some examples of soft skills. Which apply to you? Notice that some of the soft skills are descriptions, and others are actions. Both are acceptable.

Accurate	Follow procedures, regulations and policies well	Persistent
Adaptable	Friendly	Persuasive
Attentive to instructions	Goal-oriented	Practical
Careful	Good at building relationships (internal and external)	Problem-solver
Cooperative	Hard-working	Quick-thinking
Courteous	Helpful	Receptive to feedback
Creative	Innovative	Responsible
Demonstrate initiative	Motivated	Results-oriented
Detail-oriented	Motivator	Self-starter
Eager to learn	Open-minded	Sensitive
Easygoing	Organized	Task-oriented
Efficient	Outgoing	Team-oriented
Empathetic	Patient	Thorough
Energetic		Thoughtful
Flexible		Visionary

It's a good idea to identify five to 10 soft skills that are your strengths and that are relevant to the job you're applying for. Think about how you've used these soft skills, and work them into your resume skills summary and job responsibilities, your cover letter ... and later, into your interview!

Focus on Results

As you fill in the information for each job description in your job history, think about your job responsibilities, the tasks you performed, the skills you demonstrated *and* the results you got. To sell yourself to an employer, you have the option to communicate your track record for results. This shows your potential employer what you've done for others and what you can do for him. Employers don't just care about *what* you did; they care about the *results* you achieved!



As you fill in the information for each job description in your job history, think about your job responsibilities, the tasks you performed, the skills you demonstrated *and* the results you got.

For example, if you have 10 years of supervisory experience, your resume can communicate the results you got from your team during that time. Did your supervisory skills result in higher morale, improved sales and increased efficiency? If you're re-entering the work force, identify projects you've been involved in, volunteer positions you've held, part-time jobs or work you did at school that demonstrate your achievements.

To verify that the statements on your resume are results-oriented, make sure they pass the "so what?" test. Here's an example of how to go about this:

Suppose one of the job tasks on your resume states: "Designed new front-office procedures." Ask yourself, "So what? What was the result? What did that lead to? What was the outcome?" It's not enough to state what you did. Include how you did it and what the result was!

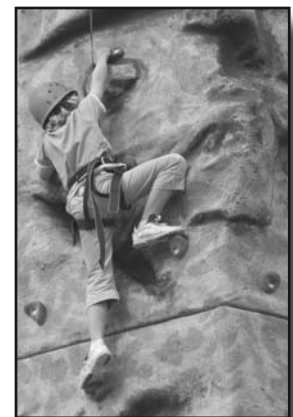
You might expand the statement to say: "Analyzed customer flow and identified obstacles to better customer service. Designed new front-office procedures to assist customers in a more efficient and friendly manner, resulting in an increase in customer retention and decrease in time spent on follow-up paperwork."

This is a great example of an action-results statement. (**Action-results statements** present your accomplishments in a format that clearly shows a potential employer how you solve problems and get results.) It gives the reader a much better idea of the skills you have and how you used them to solve a problem and produce a beneficial result.

Action-results Statements

To help you write some quality action-results statements, consider moments in your past experience when you:

- ➔ Faced challenges
- ➔ Solved problems
- ➔ Developed new ideas
- ➔ Improved systems
- ➔ Saved company/department money or time
- ➔ Increased sales
- ➔ Improved morale
- ➔ Increased efficiency or productivity



To help you write some quality action-results statements, consider moments in your past experience when you faced challenges.

Now ask yourself the following questions:

1. How did you do the things you just identified?
2. What skills did you use?
3. What personal qualities did you demonstrate?
4. What was the outcome?
5. What did you enjoy about the experience? (This is good to share during an interview.)
6. How did you benefit?
7. How did others benefit when you solved this problem?

Answering these questions should help you formulate action-results statements for your resumes. You will typically build your action-results statements on a formula that combines the problems you faced (P) and the actions you took (A), showing the results or outcomes (R). In other words:

$$P + A = R$$

Here are some examples of action-results statements. You'll note the information (P, A and R) can fall in any order.

- ➔ Promoted patient involvement as part of dental practice's overall quality and productivity improvement strategy. As a result, patient satisfaction increased by 20 percent.
- ➔ Named "Employee of the Month" twice in the past year for demonstrating excellent customer service.
- ➔ Upgraded computer skills through a 12-week intensive training program.
- ➔ Improved team efficiency by 10 percent with streamlined claims-adjustment process.

Tips for Action-results Statements

1. Break up long statements into several shorter statements for ease of reading.
2. Don't use complete sentences—drop the pronoun that starts the sentence (usually "I" or "we").
3. Start each statement with an action verb.
4. End each statement with a period.

When you use action-results statements in your job history, employers will begin to think about what you can do for them and the results that they can expect!



When you use action-results statements in your job history, employers will begin to think about what you can do for them and the results that they can expect!

Action Words

As you might guess, action-results statements must include powerful action verbs that represent your skills. Review the sample skills written as action verbs that follow. The average person has between 500 and 800 skills, so this list is *not* comprehensive.

Adapt	Engineer	Lead	Reorganize
Administer	Establish	Maintain	Repair
Analyze	Estimate	Manage	Report
Assess	Evaluate	Maximize	Research
Budget	Expand	Mentor	Resolve
Build	Facilitate	Merge	Revamp
Coach	Form	Minimize	Save
Collaborate	Found	Modify	Schedule
Communicate	Fundraise	Monitor	Secure
Compare	Generate	Negotiate	Sell
Compile	Guide	Organize	Simplify
Contribute	Handle	Perform	Solve
Coordinate	Hire	Plan	Staff
Create	Identify	Prepare	Start
Decide	Implement	Present	Streamline
Delegate	Improve	Prioritize	Supervise
Demonstrate	Improvise	Produce	Support
Design	Influence	Program	Teach
Develop	Initiate	Promote	Team up
Direct	Instruct	Provide	Track
Distribute	Interpret	Qualify	Train
Document	Interview	Recognize	Transform
Eliminate	Introduce	Reduce	Upgrade
Enable			

As you write action-results statements, remember to draw from all your past experience, including previous on-the-job and volunteer experience. You can also reference courses that you took or experience that you gained with at-home projects or self-study programs.

Once you write your action-results statements, review them, and include any industry-specific terminology that's necessary. These are words that are specific to the job you're applying for and illustrate that you know what you're talking about. For example, you might use industry-recognized names of job activities, such as: Event planning, quality assurance, user experience, bookkeeping and medical coding. Or you might mention brand names of equipment, procedures, software and programs that demonstrate your experience in the field or job. However, use acronyms sparingly and *only* when they are widely recognized. Examples might include: Windows XP or HIPAA regulations.



Once you write your action-results statements, review them, and include any industry-specific terminology that's necessary.

Now it's time to think about your resume delivery formats.

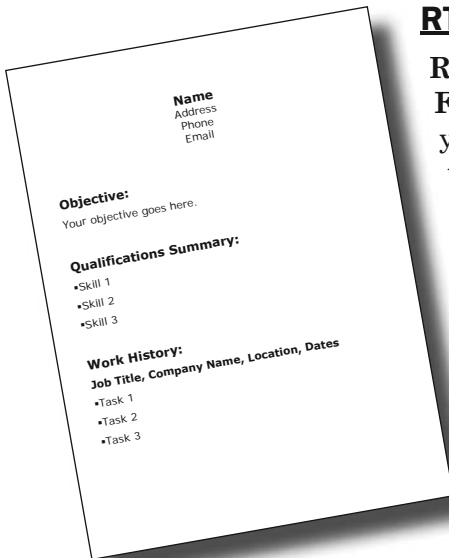
Resume Delivery Formats

You can deliver your resume in print or electronic format, although most employers prefer electronic format. When you mail or hand-deliver your resume in print, you know exactly what it looks like, and you know your reader will see it exactly as you do. However, when you deliver a resume electronically, you can't be sure how the resume will appear to your reader. That's why it's important to be aware of different electronic delivery formats.

Text-only

This is the format you should use when a potential employer asks you to cut and paste your resume information into areas of an online company or job-bank Web site. Usually, you'll create such a resume in a non-formatted manner using a computer program like Notepad. In text-only format, you *cannot* bold, italicize, use different fonts or create numbered or bulleted lists. Instead, you must use plain text along with symbols, such as equal signs (===) or hyphens (---) to serve as dividers and asterisks (*) to serve as bullets. In text-only format, tabs are generally ignored.

When you enter your resume text into a Web site, be sure to preview what you've done before you submit it. You'd be amazed how many people make spelling mistakes, leave out words or run together sentences.



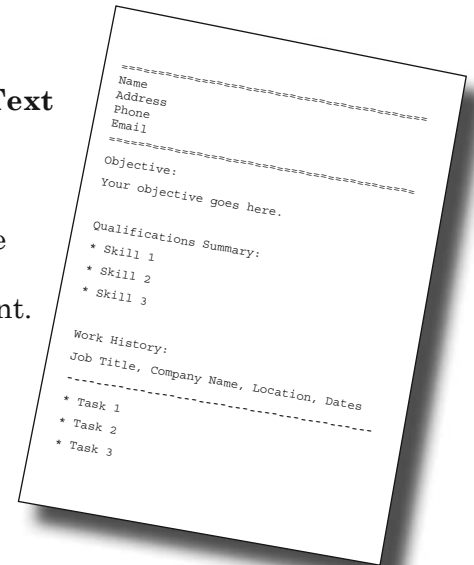
RTF format of a resume

RTF

RTF stands for “Rich Text Format.” **Rich Text Format** is an electronic format that allows you to bold, italicize, number and bullet text. However, you cannot use any fancy fonts or additional formatting. RTF can be universally read and is useful when you send your resume as an e-mail attachment.

Word

Many people with PCs create their resumes with Microsoft Word to give their resumes the most professional appearance. However, we caution you against sending your Word resume to potential employers for three very important reasons:



Plain text format for a resume

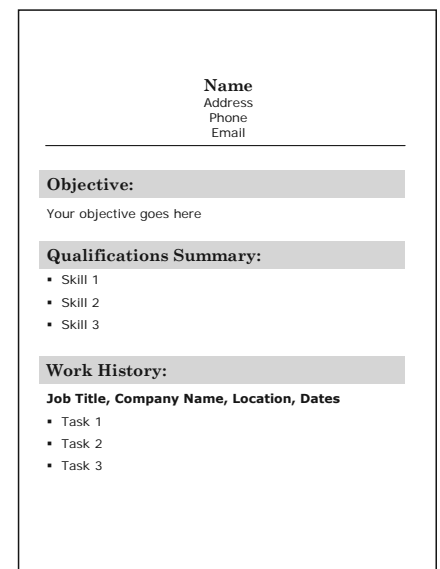


Many people with PCs create their resumes with Microsoft Word to give their resumes the most professional appearance.

1. Not all computers are PCs or have Word installed on their systems. If someone doesn't have Word, she'll be unable to read your resume.
2. The settings you use, such as margins and fonts, may not come across correctly on your reader's computer. Therefore, the resume might look strange to the reader. In other words, you cannot control how the resume looks to the reader, and it may appear differently to her than it does to you.
3. Your reader can actually edit your document.

PDF

PDF stands for *Portable Document Format*. Anyone who has Acrobat Reader can view the **Portable Document Format**. And, if someone doesn't have the reader, he can download it for free. You can convert many word processing documents, such as Microsoft Word documents, to PDF. With PDF, your reader can see an attractively formatted document but will be unable to edit it. The file size will also be quite small, which makes it ideal as an attachment to an e-mail.



Microsoft Word document as a PDF

Resume Checklist

Your resume is a printed representation of *you*. An employer will draw conclusions about you, sight unseen, from the quality of your resume. Typographical or grammatical errors are a sure way to lower your esteem in your potential employer's eyes. Why? Her thinking is that if you can't spell correctly or avoid simple errors on your resume, how can she expect you to do the work that's part of the job description?

It's vital that you review your resume with a fine-tooth comb and ask someone else to do the same. The following checklist will help ensure that your resume is attractive, professional and correct.

1. Appearance and format

- Is your resume neatly printed on good-quality paper?
- Did you use white or off-white paper with black print?
- Are there any spelling, grammar, formatting or typographic errors? The spell-check feature in your word processing software is not enough. If you're not comfortable with grammar or spelling, ask a detail-oriented friend to review everything that you send.
- Is your resume no more than two pages in length (one page front and back or two pages single-sided)?
- Is the text nicely balanced on the page?
- Is there enough white space to make the resume easy on the eye? Remember that too little white space makes your resume look cluttered.
- If you made copies of your resume, are they sharp and clear? Is the paper spotless?
- Do headings highlight your work experience?
- Is your body text at least 10 points in size?
- Are your headings bolded?
- Have you limited your use of fonts and font styles? It's best to use *one* font family (for example, Verdana or Georgia) and to avoid italics for readability. Too many fonts and font styles give your resume an amateur appearance. Use a common font. Don't use any cute or overly creative symbols for bullets.



Is your resume neatly printed on good-quality paper?

2. Organization

- Did you include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address at the top of page one?
- Does your contact information in the header have a border under it or otherwise separate itself from the rest of the resume?
- Are your statements in a prioritized order based on what is most important to the employer?
- Are the dates for your job history in proper order?
- Did you include only information pertinent to the job? Do *not* include personal information, such as birth date, height, weight, number of children, your personal hobbies or marital status. Due to equal opportunity policies of employers, employers are not allowed to consider this kind of information when they make a hiring decision.



Does your resume include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address at the top of page one?

3. Writing style

- Did you use concise phrases in short paragraphs?
- Is your content easy to read?
- Do most of the phrases in your resume start with action verbs?
- Did you avoid pronouns, such as “I,” “me,” “him” or “her”?
- Were you careful not to repeat key words or action verbs?
- Did you run a spell check and then read the resume yourself to check for spelling and grammatical errors?
- Did you have a counselor, friend, relative or professional perform a final review of your resume?



Did you have a counselor, friend, relative or professional perform a final review of your resume?

4. Reread each section of your resume, and ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it reflect the most important qualifications to the employer?
- Does it show that you know how to do what the job requires?
- Does it show that you know how to get results?
- Does it show what you've learned during your career and demonstrate that you know how to acquire new skills and grow?
- Does it show that you have a "can-do" attitude and are willing to go beyond the minimum of what is expected?
- Does it show that you can adapt to a changing work environment?
- Does it show that you know how to work with different kinds of people toward a common goal and get things done?



Does your resume show that you have a "can-do" attitude and are willing to go beyond the minimum of what is expected?

If you can answer *yes* to all of these questions, your resume is almost ready to go! Some job postings and employer Web sites provide specific instructions on how to apply or submit your resume. Follow these instructions closely. They may request that you fax or e-mail your resume. Or, they may specifically ask for a cover letter and resume. Even if a potential employer doesn't ask for a cover letter, always include one. The cover letter allows you to provide more details than you can fit on your resume. It also gives you a forum for expressing your enthusiasm about the particular job opening.

Target Your Resume



Avoid the "shotgun approach" in which you mail your resume to every possible employer and hope to catch someone's attention. This approach is very ineffective.

Once you complete your resume, you'll probably want to share it with the world. But wait—only share it with your target audience. Avoid the "shotgun approach" in which you mail your resume to every possible employer and hope to catch someone's attention. This approach is very ineffective—statistics show that for every 1,000 resumes you send out, you can expect two interviews. Not a very high rate of return!

Instead, based on your job research, carefully decide which companies and offices to approach, and send your resume to individuals at those companies. Send your resume to companies with job openings that appeal to you. Send it to key networking contacts and ask for their feedback. And, don't worry if a company you're interested in isn't hiring. You can still send your resume with a strong cover letter to get on the radar. After all, you never know. An organization that's not hiring might suddenly decide it needs someone just like you!

When you send your resume, remember that it may take awhile to get a response—people are busy. Don't be discouraged if you don't get many responses. People will probably review your resume on their own time when they have a free moment. You can always follow up with an e-mail or phone call to make sure your resume was received and to check on its status.

In a moment, we'll move on to cover letters. But first, complete the exercise that follows.

Exercise 7

It's time to revisit your very rough resume and polish it up. Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Questions 1 through 3 will help you clarify your strengths.

- 1. Identify three things that you like to do and know how to do well, and provide examples of each.**
- 2. Identify three soft skills you have, and provide examples of each.**
- 3. Give three examples of your “can-do attitude.”**

Questions 4 and 5 will help you refine the content for your resume.

- 4. Review your job tasks, and use the P + A = R formula to rewrite at least one task associated with each job. This will help you come up with several action-results statements.**
- 5. Review the lists of skills and action verbs provided. Write down all the ones that you have experience with. Review this list, and pick five to 10 that are your strongest skills.**
- 6. Now, review your job tasks again, and rewrite them using the appropriate action verbs.**

Questions 7 and 8 will help you finalize your resume.

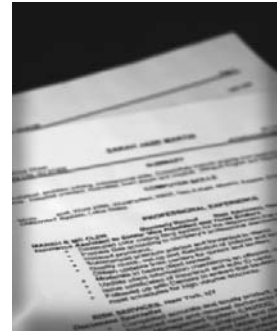
- 7. Review your resume against the checklist we provided, and make any corrections.**
- 8. Share your resume with three people. Ask for their feedback. What did they have to say? Revise accordingly.**

Review Exercise 7

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Write a Cover Letter

You'll rarely submit a resume by itself. You'll accompany your resume with a cover letter to introduce yourself. In the past, job-seekers prepared a cover letter and resume and mailed them to the potential employer. The letter was physically on top of the resume and thus "covered" it. However, today most of us submit cover letters electronically as an attachment or in the body of an e-mail. (In fact, it's a good idea to combine your cover letter or resume in to one document to help ensure a potential employer reads both items. You can also put your resume and cover letter in the body of the e-mail in addition to attaching them to the e-mail. Then, if the employer cannot open the attachments, he still has access to the information right in the e-mail.)



In the past, job-seekers prepared a cover letter and resume and mailed them to the potential employer. The letter was physically on top of the resume and thus "covered" it.



Take the time to think your letter through; refine it until it's short and to the point.

A well-written cover letter is as important as your resume. The cover letter indicates why you're contacting the employer and provides specifics about your background and qualifications. Its purpose is to entice a potential employer to read your resume. You should customize each cover letter for each opportunity that you pursue. As you write, always keep the reader in mind, as well as the culture of the company or office and the specific needs of the job you're applying for.

The manager tasked with hiring will read or scan your letter. This individual is likely to see dozens of letters, e-mails, memos and proposals each week and won't have time to read a lengthy cover letter.

Take the time to think your letter through; refine it until it's short and to the point. Tell the hiring manager how you're qualified and why you're the right person for the job. Your cover letter needs to grab her attention and pique her interest. Let your resume do the rest.

Types of Letters

We already talked about the letter of introduction, but think of all the other situations you might encounter during your job hunt or career transition. Each situation requires a different type of letter, although certain components of each letter may be the same.

- ➔ **Announce your job change or transition:** This is a letter (probably in e-mail form) that you send to colleagues, friends, family members and business acquaintances. In it, you share the news of your career goals and what you're seeking. This is a good way to let people know what your skills are and what you have to offer.
- ➔ **Network letter to friends and business acquaintances:** This is a letter (probably in e-mail form) to people in your network. In it, share your career goals and ask directly for their support and assistance. You might ask them to help you find job opportunities, connect you with people in their network or learn more about employers who need your skills.

- ➔ **Introduction letter to an employer based on a referral:** Let's say Jane tells you she knows a key manager, Joe, at ABC Company—a company you're interested in. This letter introduces you to Joe and lets him know that Jane referred you to him. It also lets you share your qualifications and how you're a good fit for the company.
- ➔ **Letter to want ads:** This is a letter that you send with your resume to an employer based on a classified ad for a job.
- ➔ **Cold-call letter to targeted companies:** This is a letter that you send with your resume to employers who are a good fit for your skills and experience and might hire people with your background. A "cold call" letter refers to the fact that you don't know anyone personally at the company and are not responding to a job opening, but you're addressing the letter to a key manager or human resources person based on your research. Your letter should highlight your skills and show the employer why he needs what you have to offer. Because you have no personal connection at the company, it's unlikely you'll get a response. That's why it's so important to follow up in this particular situation.
- ➔ **Thank-you letter:** Write a thank-you letter after every major interaction you have with someone: a networking contact, an informational interview, a formal interview, a friend who provides you assistance with your resume and so on.
- ➔ **Follow-up letter:** This is a letter or e-mail that you send after you submit a resume for a formal job opening or to follow up on an opportunity you heard about. In this letter, you might ask about anything pertinent to your needs: a time to meet, an interview, more information about the job opening or contact information.



Write a thank-you letter after every major interaction you have with someone.

Now, we'll focus on the cover letter—the letter that you use to contact a potential employer regarding a job.



Ask yourself a few key questions to help you write your cover letter.

Cover Letter for a Job

A cover letter is directed toward a company you want to work for, whether it has a current job opening or not. (Though, most of the time, you'll send a resume and a cover letter to a company that has a specific position open—a position that you want to apply for.) As with your resume, you should customize the cover letter to each company based on your research. Ask yourself the key questions that follow to help you write your letter.

- ➔ Why do you want to work for this particular company or office?
- ➔ What do you know about the company, and how did you hear of the job opportunity?
- ➔ What do you know about the position you're applying for?

- ➔ How can you help this company or office reach its goals?
- ➔ How do your qualifications meet this company's needs?

The table that follows shows an example of how you might identify the matches between the company's needs and your qualifications.

Company Needs	My Qualifications
Three-to-five years of medical transcription experience	Five years medical transcription experience for a mid-size physician's office. Achieved results in areas of increased efficiency and organization.
Strong communication skills	Proven excellence in communicating with medical staff through written and verbal means.
Knowledge of transcribing reports in all medical specialties	Experienced in transcribing reports of all types in all medical specialties. Possess working knowledge of medical terminology; anatomy and physiology; proper grammar, spelling and punctuation; and transcription technology.
Experience with EHRs	Completed MT assignments in PracticeFusion EHR format and prepared to apply these skills to other EHR software. Possess strong understanding of how EHRs affect MT job responsibilities, as well as actions MTs can take to work effectively with EHRs.

Once you complete this research, write a simple cover letter that consists of four parts:

1. **Opening/First paragraph:** Identify the position you're applying for and how you heard about it.
2. **Second paragraph:** State why you're the best person for the job—how do your abilities match the needs of the business? Provide some real-life examples to show what sets you apart from the other candidates. This is a good place to compare the company's needs with your skills and experience. Sell yourself!
3. **Third paragraph:** Emphasize why you want to work for this employer and your enthusiasm for the position. Show that you've done your homework and know a little about the company. Based on the research that you do, find a way to connect who you are with what the company's all about. Be honest, and state what you like about the company and why you prefer it instead of another.
4. **Closing/Fourth paragraph:** Assert how you plan to take action. For example, ask for an appointment to talk further about the position or for an interview opportunity. State how and when you plan to follow up. Don't close with a remark that assumes you'll wait to hear from the company. Instead, be proactive. Take action—this shows initiative!

Following are a few good examples of cover letters. Just as with our resume samples, you'll notice that these cover letters vary in style, format and content. This is OK! Remember to follow the guidelines that we present here, and you're sure to do a great job on your cover letter.

May 25, 20XX

Mr. James Ressonner
ABC Medical Office
123 Main St.
Smithtown, NY 12345

Dear Mr. Ressonner:

I am always eager for new opportunities and challenges, which is why your job posting for a medical transcriptionist caught my eye. Thanks to in-depth training in medical transcription, my experience includes everything from transcribing reports of all types and in all medical specialties to medical report editing. I also have a good understanding of medical terminology, anatomy and physiology and correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

In addition, my five years as a secretary in a busy realtor's office honed office skills applicable to the work of a medical transcriptionist. I am able to multi-task, organize files and complete paperwork. I can successfully maintain and update confidential client records and am proficient in Microsoft Office applications.

Past supervisors consistently provided me with outstanding feedback on my work, noting that I exceed expectations and have a can-do attitude. I am an upbeat and effective team player who is able to work well under pressure—an important attribute for any healthcare professional! I understand the importance of accuracy and timeliness and apply both to any project that I take on. In addition, I strive to build a strong rapport with office staff, which creates a positive working environment. I am confident that you will find my qualifications perfectly match your needs.

Enclosed is my resume providing further details of my career history and experience. I welcome the opportunity to discuss how I can add value to your organization. I will follow up next week to confirm receipt of my resume and determine the next step. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Ian King

Ian King

March 5, 20XX

Ms. Rae Lowry
Medcenter
22 Oak Ave. Ste. #44
Crispin, MA 12345

Dear Ms. Lowry:

At the suggestion of Jan Jones, an employee at XYZ Vaccine, I am writing to introduce myself and to apply for the Medical Transcriptionist position posted on your Web site. I am a Certified Medical Transcriptionist through the National Healthcareer Association. My previous background, skills and training, along with my MT training, have greatly prepared me for a successful career in medical transcription.

Following is a summary of my background:

- Graduate of U.S. Career Institute's Medical Transcription Course.
- Certified Medical Transcriptionist through the National Healthcareer Association.
- Eight years of experience as an insurance audit processor.
- Ability to work independently.
- Excellent organization and filing skills.
- Knowledge of computer databases and Microsoft Office programs.
- Expert communication skills: able to effectively communicate with in-office staff, as well as assist customers, and resolve problems in a timely manner.

The enclosed resume will provide you with more details of my experience and accomplishments.

I'm very impressed with the reputation of your medical office and respect your position in the industry. I'd be honored to be part of your office's team. I am confident I would be valued as a contributor to your organization given my background and abilities.

I will follow up next week to ensure your receipt of my resume. I look forward to scheduling a time to discuss my qualifications and your needs.

Sincerely,

Julie Smith

Julie Smith

August 4, 20XX

Ms. Amy Davis
Medical Transcription Services
684 22nd Street SW
Loveland, CO 80537

Dear Ms. Davis,

It's nearly 8 a.m. as I log on to the shared drive to which all of the medical transcriptionists who work for my company have access. I open one of the sound files and begin to transcribe. Upon completion, I move the sound file to a folder for finished reports and begin another report. In some cases, I edit medical reports, listening to the dictation and ensuring the content and format are correct. The MT company works with doctors' offices and medical facilities in different parts of the country, so I get the opportunity to transcribe reports in all medical specialties. I know that I'm lucky to do something that utilizes my medical transcription, medical editing and technology experience.

As a medical transcriptionist, I am confident in my ability to multi-task, work independently and provide the best service possible. In addition, I have solid communication, computer and grammar, spelling and punctuation skills. My broad background makes me an excellent candidate for your open position.

While it's important for medical transcriptionists to have strong organizational skills, attention to detail and the ability to solve problems, I know that the career is so much more than that. MTs are trusted with patient information. It's crucial that we be able to provide timely, accurate medical reports.

I am eager to use my skills to meet the needs of your service. Thank you for your consideration. I will call you to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Will Zellner

Will Zellner

Anna Morales
6139 Elmhurst Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80525
Home (970) 555-0017
Cell (970) 555-1429
Amorales775@msn.com

February 12, 20XX

Dr. Kyle Nelson
Weston Medical
2001 Lowe Street
Fort Collins, CO 80525

Dear Dr. Nelson:

I am very interested in the Medical Transcriptionist position I read about on Career Builder. The skills and qualifications you mentioned match my experience, and I am confident I would be a great asset to the team.

Your Needs—My Qualifications

Expertise in Medical Transcription More than 5 years' experience in transcribing medical reports for a busy pediatric office. Ability to transcribe reports in all medical specialties. Provided timely, accurate, reliable service.

Positive and Effective Team Worker Consistently received positive feedback from supervisor during performance reviews. Built strong professional rapport with clinic staff.

I am a quick learner and have the skills needed to excel. I understand the importance of dedication, time management, professionalism and customer service. This is a "win-win" situation where I can assist Weston Medical in continued success.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you. I will contact you to set up an interview.

Sincerely,

Anna Morales

Anna Morales

Guidelines for a Great Letter

No matter what type of letter you write, remember the following guidelines, and you're sure to produce an effective, professional letter.

1. Use the same heading from your resume or initial cover letter (if this is a follow-up note).
2. Be clear about what you want. Are you interested in learning more about the organization? Do you want an interview? State what you want clearly, and give reasons why the company should consider you.
3. Restate your most outstanding qualifications as they relate to this position.
4. Restate your interest in the position and in the company, as well as your interest in speaking with the employer further about your qualifications. As you write your letter, keep the job description in front of you so that you can refer to it (if applying for a job).
5. Be friendly and professional. If you use e-mail, don't be overly casual in your writing style—follow the principals of writing a formal letter.
6. Use short sentences or bulleted statements to make your letter easy to read and scan.
7. If you provide a printed version of the letter, use the same paper for your resume.
8. Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
9. Send the letter directly to someone. To help your letter land on the right desk as soon as it arrives, call the office before you prepare your letter. Introduce yourself, and ask for the name of the person on staff who handles hiring for the office or company. Confirm the spelling of that person's name and his or her job title. Address your letter to that person. When you make your follow-up call, ask for that person. This way, you do everything you can to ensure that you're in contact with the individual who will make the hiring decision about you.
10. Follow up by phone after you send a letter. Remember that the person who receives your letter probably receives lots of other pieces of communication, and your letter may get buried on her desk or in a file. Your phone call will remind her of your needs. Of course, once you get a response from a company, it's a great idea to send a thank-you letter.

Thank-you Letter

Now that you have a firm foundation on cover letters, let's discuss thank-you letters. Whether you spoke with someone on the phone for an informational interview, met for coffee to network or just finished an interview, you should send a thank-you note. A thank-you note allows you to do multiple things. With a thank-you note, you can express sincere appreciation for what the person did, as well as show interest in the job and/or organization. It's also an opportunity to briefly restate your qualifications and any information that you failed to mention in the interview. Don't forget to mention a date and time you will follow up.



Whether you spoke with someone on the phone for an informational interview, met for coffee to network or just finished an interview, you should send a thank-you note.

And, one more word of advice on thank-you letters. If you interview with more than one person within a company, send *each* person a *personal* thank-you note—do not send a person a note that reads just like the one that you sent to his coworker and his manager. These people will likely compare your notes, so show that you took the extra time to personalize your thank-yous instead of repeating the same thing in each note.

Here are some good examples of thank-you letters after an interview.

Dear David,

Thank you for taking the time this afternoon to have a phone conversation with me about the Medical Transcription position. I enjoyed speaking with you and learning more about the position, as well as the company.

This possibility is of great interest to me, and I believe my skills and experience closely align with your needs. I understand the accuracy and commitment this position will require in working with your patients' medical information and am excited about the opportunity. I appreciate your consideration for a formal interview.

Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you next week.

Sincerely,

Sandra Wright

Sandra Wright

303.555.2835
sandramwright@msn.com

June 10, 20XX

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the Medical Transcription position with me. ABC Medical sounds like a wonderful company to work for. It's clear that it values its employees and provides exceptional service. I would be excited to contribute to such a company, and I believe that my five years of MT experience in a hospital setting would be beneficial to you.

Again, thank you for your consideration. I will contact you by the end of next week to learn of your decision.

I look forward to the possibility of joining your fine team.

Sincerely,

Ann Jones

Ann Jones

Generate Good References

As soon as your job hunt begins, you need to line up your references. **References** are people who can speak positively about your skills, strengths, work habits and character. A potential employer checks with your references (usually by phone) to verify the skills and experience you present in your resume and interview. It's the only means the employer has to confirm that you can actually do what you say you can do.

A company may ask for references at any time; however, it typically does so as part of the application process or when you pass the initial interview and are considered for the job. There's no need to submit your references before you're asked. However, some people like to provide a short list on their resume—it's up to you.

Choose your references wisely! Your references should be people who can speak positively and highly of your performance. To identify your references, create a list of people you trust who can describe your strongest qualities at work because they've known you on the job. Your references should include people you worked with or for. They might include:



References are people who can speak positively about your skills, strengths, work habits and character.



To identify your references, create a list of people you trust who can describe your strongest qualities at work because they've known you on the job.

A past supervisor or manager: This is someone who can talk about what it was like to manage or supervise you, your contributions, how you worked with (or without) direction and supervision, how you worked toward a common goal and how open you were to learning new skills and taking on additional challenges.

A former co-worker, especially one with seniority or key responsibilities: This person should be able to speak about your ability to work as part of a team and your contributions.

Someone who worked for you: This gives the employer an idea of what kind of supervisor or team leader you are.

Your trainer: A trainer who worked with you on an on-going basis at a previous job is someone who could talk about how quickly you learn and how you apply what you learn to new situations.

If you're right out of school, a former instructor makes a good reference. You can also select someone who knows you from a volunteer organization, service club or charitable organization.

Contact Your References

Once you know whom you would like as references, contact them and ask if they'll be references for you. They may not realize that you're in a career transition or a job hunt, so take some time to update them on your goals.

When you first call or e-mail your references, update them on your job objective, and give them a copy of your resume. Point out some of your key qualifications and accomplishments that you hope they'll cover when an employer calls. Tell them about some of the jobs you're pursuing so they have a better idea of your goals. Let them know that you value and respect their professionalism and the way they manage or work with people on the job. They may also be great networking contacts for you and have some job leads. Don't be shy about asking your references for suggestions for your job search.

Try to find at least four or five high-quality people who enthusiastically agree to be your references. Move on if you sense any hesitation on a person's part when you make your request—one mediocre or poor reference could cost you the job. After an individual agrees to be a reference, you can ask him to write a letter of recommendation or ask if the employer can call him to provide a reference. You might tell the reference about the job you're applying for, and mention the abilities that you hope he can comment upon. For example, you might want him to comment on your organizational skills, your ability to learn quickly or your multi-tasking abilities.

Give your references advance notice if you know an employer plans to contact them. Provide your references with a description of the job you applied for. If you've already interviewed with the employer, you might have a sense of what the employer's looking for and be able to communicate this to your references. Your reference will then be better prepared to provide information about your skills and abilities that address the employer's needs. For example, suppose you just finished an interview where the employer asked you about your ability to handle a large volume of customers while you provide exceptional customer service, learn quickly, handle customer needs immediately and are flexible with changing job duties. Let your reference know what an employer's looking for, remind your reference of the skills you have and try to provide specific examples that demonstrate these skills.



Try to find at least four or five high-quality people who enthusiastically agree to be your references.



Once you line up your references, create a reference sheet with their names and contact information.

Your Reference List

Once you line up your references, create a reference sheet with their names and contact information. Prepare this in advance so that you can easily access it when a potential employer asks for a list of references. This is a handy sheet to have if you're asked for references on an application form. Always bring a reference sheet with you to interviews, and supply it when requested. The sheet should include each person's name, current title, current employer and contact information. Beneath each name, include a brief statement of how you know that person. For example:

Bob Smith
 Former supervisor from 2005-2009 at ABC Company
 Vice President, ABC Company
 (515) 123-4567

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation from a reference should be typed and should include all necessary contact information for your reference. The reference should not address the letter to anyone in particular. You can make copies of an original letter with a signature. Keep the copies on file until they're requested. If a reference sends you a letter of recommendation electronically, you can make a PDF version of it.

Give letters of recommendation to a potential employer when requested to do so. These letters should state:

- ➔ How long your reference has known you and/or worked with you.
- ➔ What impressed her about your work.
- ➔ Your personality traits that are significant in the workplace.
- ➔ How you'll add value in the new position.
- ➔ How the new employer can reach the reference if needed.



Give letters of recommendation to a potential employer when requested to do so.

Some references will be short on time and may ask you to write a draft letter for them to customize. This is a great opportunity to toot your own horn!

Maintain Your References

You always want to feel totally confident in what your references are going to say about you. It's your job to maintain a professional relationship with your references to keep those references current.

Always keep your references updated in regard to your current schooling, job and volunteer work. Of course, let your references know when you get a new job, and thank them for their assistance. Keep in touch with them when you start your new position, and ask how you can support them.

A Final Word on Following Up on Resumes and Cover Letters

You're not finished just because you collected and distributed your marketing collateral. You still have to follow up!



If the instructions on a job description say, "No phone calls, please," do not follow up with a phone call.

When you submit your resume and cover letter, note any special instructions regarding follow-up. For example, if the instructions on a job description say, "No phone calls, please," do not follow up with a phone call. This makes it close to impossible to follow up, short of an e-mail to a specific person. In such a case, you just need to let go, and move on to your next opportunity.

However, when there are no special instructions for following up, by all means, call! In today's hiring world, it's not realistic for an employer to contact every person who submits a resume or application. So, don't wait for a phone call or return e-mail; be proactive, and place the call yourself.

When you leave your message, state that you're calling to verify your resume was received. You can also use this opportunity to summarize how you're qualified for the position. Make your call brief, and show your enthusiasm for the position. You may not get a return call, but at least you made an effort to follow up. This effort ensures your name will stand out as the employer reviews piles of resumes.

You'll probably be surprised at how hiring practices vary among employers. One employer will respond to resumes immediately. Another may drag out the process for weeks or months. In fact, it's not uncommon to get a letter in the mail from an employer months later, thanking you for applying and letting you know she's hired someone else. Some employers may e-mail or call you to let you know they've changed course and are redefining the position. These are things over which you have no control. However, you can decide how long you want to wait for a response before you look elsewhere.

In any case, be patient, and don't take a lack of response personally. Maintain your professionalism at all times. You never know when an opportunity might circle and again present itself to you down the road.

Last but not least, stay organized throughout the resume submittal and follow-up process. Keep track of the various resumes and applications you submitted, the ones you're following up on and the irons in the fire to explore new possibilities as you network.



You'll probably be surprised at how hiring practices vary among employers. One employer will respond to resumes immediately. Another may drag out the process for weeks or months.

Now, it's time to try your hand at a cover letter and a thank-you note. These can become templates for future situations.

Exercise 8

Complete the following on a separate piece of paper.

1. **Write a four-part cover letter based on what you learned. If you're currently looking for a job, this letter should address a real person about a real job. If you're not actively looking for a job, simply make up the name of the recipient, company and job title—however, put in the necessary information for each part of the letter to the best of your ability.**
2. **Write a sample thank-you letter for either an informal interview or a real interview. Again, this letter can address a real person or an imaginary one.**
3. **Now, let's compile your reference list. Identify three to five potential references, and explain their relationships to you.**
4. **Consider how your references might answer these questions about you.**
 - ➔ **Are you flexible and adaptable? Can you to adapt to a changing work place and work responsibilities?**
 - ➔ **How do you work with a team?**
 - ➔ **What strengths do you bring to a team?**
 - ➔ **How would your reference describe your personality?**
 - ➔ **What are some examples of positive results that you achieved on the job?**
5. **Now, prepare your own letter of recommendation. Write a letter following the guidelines that we discussed. (Pretend you are a former manager or co-worker who worked with you.)**

Review Exercise 8

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

The Work-from-home Option

In a moment, we'll move on to the final section of this kit. But, first, let's address how what you've learned about your job hunt and marketing collateral might change if you want to work from home.

Today, technology and easy access to necessary equipment has made it possible for people in different careers to work from home, both full and part time. For example, Medical transcriptionists use the Web to download dictation. They transcribe reports on their home computers and upload the completed reports for review. Medical coders and billers use similar processes to code records and complete insurance forms from home and send and receive this information electronically. A wedding and event planner can set up a home office where she conducts meetings with clients and coordinates everything from receptions to corporate conferences. And massage therapists and child daycare specialists are able to set up portions of their homes to accommodate their businesses, too. Even certified personal fitness trainers and nutritional specialists can purchase the equipment they need to train clients from home!

As you can see, the options for at-home employment are many and varied. If working from home seems ideal to you, and your chosen career provides this option, pay close attention to the information that follows!

Marketing Collateral for the Home-based Business

We've discussed marketing collateral extensively in this kit. You're ready to prepare everything from a letter of introduction and resume to a cover letter and thank-you notes. For the most part, these materials won't change much whether you apply for an in-office position or a work-at-home position.

Your letter of introduction and persistence in sending it, following up and setting up interviews or networking opportunities will still be crucial to your success. And you'll still need to apply for positions with your resume and cover letter. But there are a few other tools you might find helpful in applying for work-from-home positions.

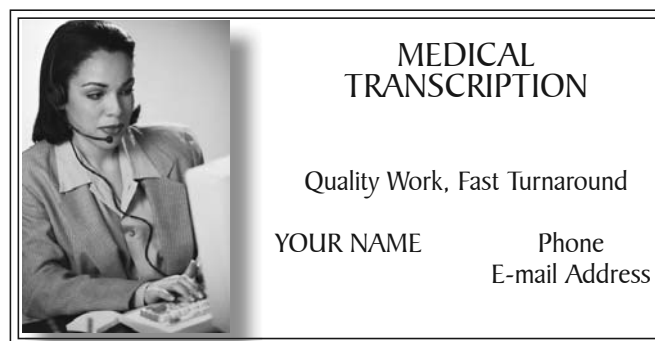
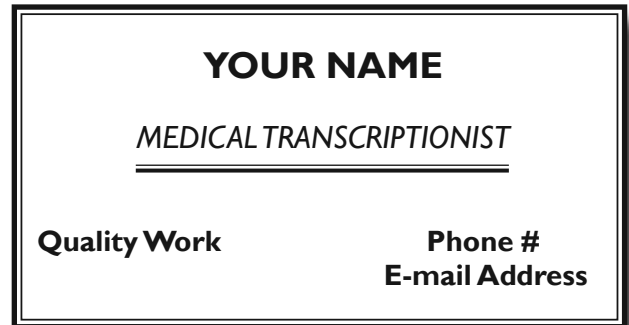
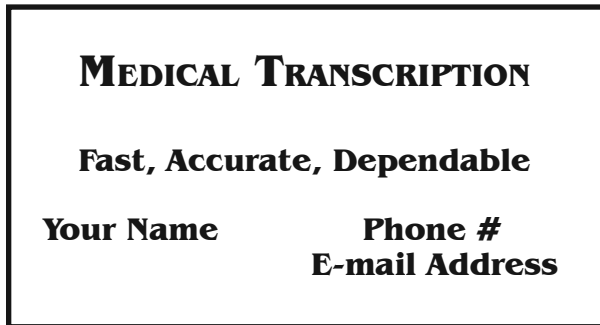
Business Cards

A business card is an excellent tool to promote your business and what you have to offer. It enhances your professional image and is a convenient way to provide your clients with your name and telephone number.

A business card is far more than a piece of paper with a name, address and phone number on it. When done well, your card makes an impression, establishes your credibility and lets you stand out to prospective clients.

Business cards are not expensive, and you can order the minimum number to start. Most print shops have a variety of card stock (paper) and type styles to choose from.

Following are some sample business card styles.



You can use a style similar to these or create your own business card. Some people create a logo, using their names, initials or the name of their businesses. However, be sure your card is easy to read and professional. Don't design a card that appears cluttered or that has an ornate, complicated type style.

You can include business cards when you send your letters of introduction

Flyers

A flyer is an important marketing tool for the person just starting a business. Your flyer should be either one page or a half-page in length and should highlight the services you offer. To attract clients, your flyer should focus on the benefits of your service. Tell people how you can solve their problems and make their lives easier.

If you want to add a special offer on your flyer, you might include something like: "New clients receive a 15% discount for the first month!"

You can paper clip your business card to the flyer, so you have only one item to hand to the client you are meeting in person.

You don't need to spend a lot of money printing fancy flyers. You should, however, print your flyer on a good-quality, colored paper. You can produce a nice flyer on just your computer; the sample flyer that follows is an example of this.

MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION

SERVICES OFFERED

- 24-hour turnaround time
- Chart notes
- Insurance letters
- Hospital records
- All medical specialties
- Letter-quality printing
- Pickup and delivery
- Reasonable rates

Please call me if you need transcription services. Let's discuss how I can help.

JANE SMITH

(213) 555-9292

jsmith@attbox.net



Canvass

Once you prepare your business cards and flyers, an alternative to letters is to canvass, or conduct in-person visits to prospective clients. Think of your list of places likely to employ someone in your field. You are likely to be remembered if you personally visit these places. You should speak with the owner, if possible, and be sure to leave a business card.

Additional Tips

Let's discuss a few additional tips that you may find helpful as you look for jobs that allow you to work from home:

- ➔ Read the classified ads in your local newspaper each day. Even though you may see ads for in-office jobs in your career, you should respond. Employers are sometimes open to contracting with at-home employees, at least temporarily. Simply explain your career specialty, and ask the employer if he would consider using your services as an alternative to hiring a staff person or to temporarily handle the workload until the job vacancy is filled.
- ➔ Just as you would prepare for an in-office job, you should have a resume and cover letter ready as you apply for work-from-home opportunities. When asked about your previous work experience, you can present a copy of your course outline, which appears on the last page of this manual.
- ➔ With your introductory letter, business cards and flyers, you're ready to begin contacting clients. Remember the keys that we discussed earlier in this kit. Identify potential clients in your community. Once you prepare your marketing materials, you'll send your letters of introduction, ensuring these letters exhibit good grammar, spelling and punctuation. Keep track of your contacts, and make follow-up calls. Continue to take these steps until you have your first clients and whenever you want additional clients!

FAQs About Home-based Businesses

Now that you have an idea as to how to gain clients should you choose to work from home, let's answer some frequently asked questions about home-based businesses. Our goal is to help you feel as comfortable as possible about finding your first clients and building up your business.

Expenses

If the work you do requires driving a substantial distance or an overnight stay, you may want to consider charging for these expenses. Keep careful records of these costs.

Do I Need a Business License?

Laws regarding business licensing vary from state to state. Most of our graduates do not purchase a license to work out of their homes because they are not creating a neighborhood nuisance. (People are not coming and going from their home, nor are they selling a product that requires them to charge sales tax.)

If you would like to know more about the requirements in your area, you can contact the Better Business Bureau or your city tax office.

As you decide on a name for your business, keep in mind that if you use your last name, you usually don't have to register the business with the Secretary of State or Department of Revenue. For example, if your name is Janine Boeing, you might call your business Janine Boeing Medical Coding or Boeings Wedding and Events. However, if you choose to call your business Reliable Medical Coding or Perfect Party Planners, you may want to register the name and pay a registration fee so no one else is able to use this name for his or her business.

Many areas have local Small Business and International Development Centers (SBIDC) that provide free advice if you decide to expand your business. Contact the Department of Revenue office in your area for your local SBIDC phone number, or contact directory assistance, and ask for the SBIDC.

What about Taxes and Recordkeeping?

You'll want to track both your income and your expenses. Income records are important when you apply for a loan or file your tax return. Make a copy of all checks that you receive from clients before you deposit them. These copies will provide you with a way to prove your income.

If you contract for an agency or firm, your clients will provide you with a 1099 form at the end of the year for tax purposes. This form is similar to a W-2 form and will list the total amount paid to you that year. If you have kept good income records, you will be able to compare your figures against those that your clients provide.

To track your expenses, you should set up your own set of financial records. Carefully record all business expenses, including car mileage, and keep these records in a safe place.

You must record how much time you spend on each use if you use items like your car or computer for both business and personal use. For example, if you purchase a computer for your business but also use it for your personal finances, you will need to track how many hours you use the computer for business versus personal use. At the end of the year, you can report the percentage of business usage. You can use a similar procedure to track your car usage measured in mileage. You can use the mileage method only if you use your car 50 percent or more for your business. Otherwise, you need to record all the exact expenses incurred in using the vehicle. Then, multiply that total by the percent that you used the car for business. For example, if you use a car for 45 percent business and you have a total of \$500 in automobile expenses, you can probably deduct \$225 for car expenses. For all tax questions, you should certainly consult an accountant, even if it is just to set up your tax records.

Because your office may be in your home, you may be able to deduct a portion of your personal home expenses (rent, mortgage payments, utilities). This percentage is based on the square footage of your home allotted to your business, as long as you have a room used exclusively as your home office. It's essential that you consult with your tax preparer before you begin your business to ensure that you keep proper records for tax purposes.

It's easier to track expenses and income if you keep your business records and your personal records separate. A good way to do this is to open a separate checking account for your business. This does not need to be a special business account. You can simply open a separate personal account, and include a short identifying phrase like "Medical Transcription Services" or "Fitness Trainer" below your name.

If you don't open a separate account for your business, try to keep your business purchases separate from your personal purchases, even if this means writing two checks at the same store. This will make it much easier to track of your business expenses.

In addition to these tips, your local Chamber of Commerce can provide you with general business information and advice. You can obtain information and forms for state withholding taxes and state sales tax from your local Department of Revenue. The Internal Revenue Service can provide information about and forms for Social Security and federal income taxes.

Your Career and Your Home Business

Now, let's talk specifically about your career and working from home.

Many medical transcriptionists now work from home. Small medical practices often find that they save valuable office space in using independent medical transcriptionists. In addition, hospitals and clinics will probably continue to outsource to medical transcription service organizations. These organizations, in turn, will continue to need medical transcriptionists, most of whom will work from home. In fact, even organizations that have "in-house" medical transcription departments usually have MTs who work remotely. There's no doubt that for the near future, a growing number of MTs will work from home.

Keep in mind that when you begin to work as a medical transcriptionist, prospective clients may expect you to work in their offices for a certain amount of time. They'll want to get to know you and the quality of your work well. You'll want to spend time building a solid relationship with your clients. If you prove that you are reliable and perform well in the office, you're more likely to be considered should at-home opportunities in transcription become available.

Clients for the At-home Medical Transcriptionist

If you want to work from home as a medical transcriptionist, your best source of potential clients will be small, local healthcare offices. Create a master list of client possibilities that numbers 150-200 businesses, if possible. Your list will include offices of physicians. It will also include offices of other healthcare providers, such as chiropractors, pain management specialists, physical therapists and mental health professionals, to name a few.

How will you find offices for your master list? Use your local Yellow Pages. Identify each Yellow Pages category that relates to healthcare. Study the companies listed under such categories to see which might be small businesses. (For example, if a physician is listed singly, not as part of a display ad for a large practice group, she might be running her own practice.) Your goal is to find physicians' offices with only a few providers (such as a gynecologist working with a nurse practitioner, or two psychiatrists in practice together). Large practices, such as a surgery center employing 20 physicians, probably will have their own staff transcriptionists and will be less likely to hire an independent transcriptionist.

Just as the Yellow Pages can help you identify physicians and other healthcare providers to add to your master list, another source you could look into is the Web MD Little Blue Book. Web MD Publishing Services in Avon, Connecticut, publishes this book for major cities. Contact the publishing company for information regarding your area by calling 1-800-345-6865 or by visiting their Web site at www.lbb.webmd.com.

The offices on your master list are those that you'll want to send your marketing materials to. Send them your letter of introduction, track your contacts and make follow-up calls. Keep in mind that one of your goals as you follow up is to find out how an office is currently handling its transcription and to see if there is any way you can help.

Here are some things you might ask:

- ➔ Does the doctor dictate his chart notes?
- ➔ Is he considering doing this?
- ➔ Does he have consultation reports or letters needing transcription?
- ➔ Are you using another outside service? If so, are you happy with the results?
- ➔ Would you need my services when your regular transcriptionist goes on vacation?
- ➔ Do you ever have overflow work that your regular transcriptionist might need help with?

It's true that a small healthcare office often makes the best "first employer" for a new transcriptionist because the transcriptionist will be preparing reports for only a few healthcare providers while honing professional skills. However, if you're confident of your skills, call each of the hospitals in your area. Ask for the medical transcription department, and then ask for the supervisor. Ask if the department is currently hiring transcriptionists. Also, ask if they use offsite transcriptionists.

For transcriptionists with solid skills, transcription services are also an increasingly promising source of employment. To find services in your area, look in the local Yellow Pages under such categories as "Medical Transcription" or "Administrative Services." To find remote services that hire transcriptionists to work via the Internet, do an Internet search using key words, such as "Medical Transcription Services" or "Medical Transcription Employment." On its Web site, each service will give instructions on how to apply for work.

Prepare for an Interview

As you identify potential employers in your community, send letters of introduction and make follow-up calls, you're working your way toward setting up interviews. We'll discuss the interview process in more detail shortly, but let's outline a few things that you, an MT who wants to work from home, can do to ensure that you're prepared for an interview with a potential client.

Before each interview, be sure to organize several sets of your promotional materials, including your business card, flyer, resume and any letters of recommendation you have. You should also prepare several sample reports as examples. Retype or reprint some of the reports you did for this course, and correct any errors that your instructor pointed out. Make high-quality copies on good paper (20-lb. bond). You want these reports to be perfect. These will show a potential client that you can do the work, that you have the proper equipment at home to produce good quality work and that you know the proper formats for medical reports.

Organize each set of promotional materials into a packet or "press kit." Office-supply stores sell pocket jackets, which work well for this. Make at least four sets of your materials for each interview. This will ensure that you have a copy for each person you meet with, as well as a copy for yourself. In addition to your press kits, bring along an ample supply of business cards and the course outline.

Organize your own copies and materials in your portfolio so that you can find what you need quickly without fumbling or looking for certain papers. In addition to bringing your promotional materials, bring copies of any correspondence that has been exchanged, copies of the employment application if one was completed, training and academic records and notices of any special recognition and awards you have received.

Review Your Course Materials

You may be required to take a terminology and/or transcription test as part of the interview. To prepare, review your flashcards and rules; however, do not spend time trying to "cram" for your interview.

Calculate Your Productivity

At the interview, you will need to be able to say how much work you can complete in an hour or day. Have several figures prepared:

- ➔ Your typing speed
- ➔ Your transcription time/dictation ratio
- ➔ How many pages you can complete in an hour
- ➔ How many lines you can complete in an hour
- ➔ How many minutes of dictation you can complete in an hour or a day

For your hourly total, take the number 60, and divide it by your ratio. For your daily total, take your hourly total, and multiply it by the number of hours you plan to work.

You can compute this information with your course materials. Select a set of reports of average difficulty from Packs 3 or 4. Time the length of the audio for these reports. Then, transcribe the reports. Keep track of how long it takes you to research, transcribe and proofread your work. Then, follow the instructions provided in your course materials on calculating productivity to determine your transcription ratio.

These work estimates are just that—estimates. To know precisely how much work you can produce hourly or daily for a particular client, you will need to gain experience transcribing for that client.

Questions Clients Might Ask

As an independent medical transcriptionist, your clients may have questions for you about everything from how you can work at home to your training. You should be prepared to answer questions like those that follow during an interview.

➔ **Q:** “How can transcriptionists work successfully at home?”

A: “In my experience, I have seen that healthcare providers whose transcriptionists work at home free up a lot of space in their offices. I am confident in the quality of my work. Let me start out on a trial basis.”

➔ **Q:** “Do you have any experience doing medical reports?”

A: “I have transcribed many medical reports in all general medical specialties.

Here are some samples of my work.” (Present work samples.)

➔ **Q:** “Do you have any actual experience aside from your training?”

A: “The transcription I did in my course was from authentic, doctor dictation. This will be my first opportunity to produce reports for a healthcare office, but I have office experience and understand the demands of a business office. (Or substitute whatever phrase is appropriate for your previous work experience.) Let me show you the quality of my work. Here are some reports that I typed.”

➔ **Q:** “I only hire people with experience.”

A: “I understand your reservations, but I know that I am qualified. Here is an outline of the in-depth course I completed. The transcription I did in my course was from authentic, doctor dictation, and because of this, I know I can do a great job for you. I will gladly take a test or type one of your reports so that you can see that I do have the skills that will enable me to do a good job for you.”

Or:

“I have been successful in all of my previous employment experiences. I have excellent references, and I am willing to transcribe a report or two, if you like.”

Questions You Might Ask

To determine if your needs and those of a client match, be sure to discuss the following:

1. Amount of work

Let the client know how much work you can do each day or week. Set your workload at a comfortable level for yourself. You can always take on more work later.

2. Rate of pay

As a subcontractor or employee of a transcription service or hospital, you will be paid the department's standard line rate. Be sure to ask if there is any incentive pay offered. Incentive pay is a bonus paid to transcriptionists who produce a high volume of work.

If you work for your own clients, you will tell the client your line rate. When you start out, it is a good idea to set lower prices. This low starting rate may be just the incentive a client needs to say yes. And you can always raise your rates later. If a client would like an estimate of monthly charges, you can ask to see a typical day's transcription and then calculate the cost per day based on the number of lines. You then multiply the daily cost by 22, which is the average number of workdays in a month. For more information, see the section Charge for Services.

3. Turnaround time

Find out the turnaround time that the client or service desires.

4. Pickup and delivery

If you have items to pickup and deliver, some transcription services provide pickup and delivery. With private clients, you will probably have to arrange for pickup and delivery. Find out exactly what time the work is to be picked up and delivered.

If You Get the Job, Finalize the Details

If the client would like to engage your services, there are a number of things you will need to discuss and some things you will want to obtain before you can begin working. Take a list like the following to each interview you attend so that you are prepared if a client wants to hire you. Individual healthcare providers may not have preferences in many of these areas and may ask for your recommendations.

1. Editing policies

Ask if your client or service has any special policies regarding editing dictation. Are there any restrictions on editing?

2. Flagging policies

Does the client or service have a special procedure it wants you to follow when you need to flag a report to the dictator's attention? Are there any special forms to use?

3. Digital audio instructions

Ask how you'll access digital audio files and submit reports.

4. End-of-report information

Is anything required other than the dictation and transcription dates and dictator's and transcriptionist's initials? There may be a total number of lines in the report.

5. Records

Find out what kind of information your client wants you to track. You will definitely record the number of lines that you type for your client each day. From this, you will prepare your invoice. In addition, your client may ask you to keep a list of the patients whose reports you transcribed on a given day. A transcription service may provide you with forms for recording this information.

6. Invoicing

Discuss with your client how she wants to be billed. If you work for a service, you will probably fill out a form similar to a time sheet, but instead of reporting how many hours you work each day, you will report how many lines you typed each day. If you work for your own private clients, you will bill them. You should decide with your client how often you will prepare an invoice. This is usually done every two weeks. If you have a client for whom you transcribe only occasionally, you might want to prepare an invoice monthly.

7. Report storage

Your client might want you to keep a copy of the work you produce on your computer on a CD or flashdrive. Ask how long you need to maintain such copies. Keep all reports for at least several weeks, in case they are returned for corrections.

8. Software

Ask if there is a specific software program your client wants you to use.

9. Abbreviations

Ask if there is a list of the client's commonly used abbreviations or personal slang.

10. Hospital abbreviations

Hospitals that The Joint Commission accredits are required to keep a list of unacceptable abbreviations. You may not use these unacceptable abbreviations in medical reports for such hospitals. Obtain this list, if applicable.

11. Physicians on staff

Obtain a list of the physicians on staff for a hospital. This will help you check the spelling of physicians' names.

12. Format samples

Obtain samples of the formats that the client is currently using. Most hospitals will use the same format for H&Ps, consultations and discharge summaries. Operative reports often have different formats, so be sure to get a sample if you will be typing operative reports. Ask if there are special requirements for margins or paragraph styles. Is there a particular font style you should use? What font size is preferred, 10 or 12? Is proportional type allowed? A client may ask for your recommendations on format. Show samples of the formats you learned in this course, and allow him to choose. Record all of this format information on a format summary sheet, for your reference.

Send a Confirmation Letter

If you made a verbal agreement with a client to provide transcription services, send a letter to confirm what you discussed. Thank the client for his time and for the opportunity to be of service. Restate whatever you agreed upon: the amount of work you will do, the rate of pay, the turnaround time and pickup and delivery arrangements. This will clear up any miscommunication that may have occurred and put your agreement in writing. Even if you have the job, it is still important to put your best foot forward. Show your employer that you are a professional.

Charge for Services

As an independent medical transcriptionist, you will likely have some questions on how to charge and how much to charge for your work. Let's discuss those topics now.

How to Charge?

Medical transcriptionists are usually paid by the line, by the page or by the hour. If you work off-site as an independent contractor, you will most often charge a line or page rate. The reason for this is that a line or page rate is based on production only. Therefore, the fact that you are a new transcriptionist and may initially take more time to transcribe reports will not affect the doctor.

If you are hired as an on-site transcriptionist, you may be offered an hourly rate because you will be considered an employee. If you are hired as an employee in a healthcare office or a hospital transcription department, you may also receive benefits and be on salary instead of being paid an hourly rate. This depends on the individual office, and you should discuss this with the employer before you accept the position.

What to Charge?

One way to charge for your services is by line rate. To determine the current line rate for contract transcription services in your area, perform an informal market survey of local healthcare offices. Choose 10 to 20 small, local healthcare offices that you don't plan to approach for work. (Perhaps they are too far from your home, or they are in a specialty that you don't prefer.) Call each office, introducing yourself by name and profession. Let these offices know that you are not calling to inquire about work but rather to get an idea of the local rate for contract medical transcription services. If you can obtain rate information from two or three of these offices, you will have a good idea of what to charge in your area.

In most areas, it is fairly safe to charge 10 to 12 cents per line when you first begin working for a client. As your skills improve along with the working relationship with the client, you can raise your rates by one to two cents per line, depending on the original starting rate. For example, if you initially charged 12 cents, you might increase your rate by 1 cent after a year with the client. The key is to have a well-developed relationship with the client before you consider a rate increase. Be flexible, and discuss your intentions to increase your rates before doing so.

With the increased use of voice-recognition technology in chart-note preparation, some experienced transcriptionists are moving into medical transcription editing. As an editor, a medical transcriptionist proofreads computer-generated lines of transcription. On average, editors charge 3 to 5 cents a line.

Another way to charge for your services is by page rate. The average page rate is between \$3 and \$5. This can vary quite a bit, depending on the area. An average page has 35 to 40 lines of transcription; therefore, if you were to calculate the rate based on 10 cents per line, you would charge between \$3.50 and \$4.00 per page. To be certain about whether page rates are common in your area, do an informal market survey just as you did to discover common line rates in your area.

If you are hired by a doctor or hospital to work on-site, the rate of pay will already be established. However, you may decide to negotiate for a higher amount—that is perfectly acceptable. Be aware that the rate can be as high as \$20/hour and as low as \$10/hour. Keep in mind that if you are also receiving benefits, such as health insurance, vacation and sick leave, this may lower your hourly wage.

Counting Lines

Although your course covers this topic, questions still come up for many people about how to count lines. As you know, most off-site transcriptionists charge by the line. Now that you know how and what to charge, we will discuss the issue of what exactly is considered a line.

A line is generally considered to be 65 characters long. You may work for a client who prefers to have an 80-character line, and you can set margins to reflect this, but for billing purposes, you will consider one line to be 65 characters.

Each letter, symbol and space between each word is included in the character count. When you count lines, group short lines together to make one line. It is critical that you do not charge for whole lines if they are only half lines.

Counting lines is somewhat of an estimate. Clients do not expect you to strictly count every character. You will get better at estimating after you count lines for a period of time.

Some computer software programs include line and character counting features.

Refer to your user's guide or research on the Internet to find out if you have this feature. For example, when you open a document in many word-processing programs, you will find the character count in the lower left-hand corner of the screen. Once you receive the character count, you can divide it by 65 to calculate the line count. Be sure to round up or down, depending on the amount. Report your total line count in whole lines, not fractions of a line.

Here's a rule of thumb related to rounding. If the number to the right of the decimal point is 5 or higher, round the whole number up to the next highest number. If the number to the right of the decimal point is lower than 5, drop the number to the right of the decimal, and do not round up. (So, 10.5 lines would be billed as 11 lines and 10.4 lines would be billed as 10 lines).

Record Keeping

Each day, you will keep track of the number of lines typed for each client. You also may record patient names and other information your client requests. These recordkeeping functions help track reports. Sometimes, reports will be missing from patient files, and the doctor may not remember if he dictated the report. If you keep good records, you will be able to let your client know the report's status.

If a transcription service employs you, it may provide log sheets, or you may devise your own system. You could use a database program on your computer to store this information. Following are some examples of daily logs. The first is a typical log sheet for a hospital. The second log shows the work done on a given day for two different physicians' offices.

DAILY LOG SHEET

Hospital _____ DATE _____

Patient Name	Doctor	Report	Date	Lines
Small, Artie	Feliz	DS	11-28	35
Avertig, Keith	Miyamoto	H&P	11-28	52
Davis, Mary	Ibrahami	Cons	11-28	92
Posner, Gerry	Snow	DS	11-28	41
Wilson, Pearl	Patel	OP	11-28	22
Stamps, Harry	Pak	OP	11-29	128
Martin, Lilly	Pak	H&P	11-29	88
				Total: 458


DAILY LOG SHEET

Date: 8-11-xx

Client	Patients	Lines
Dr. Snow	Hays, Barry	30
	Brown, Ron	15
	Smith, Clarence	14
	Johnson, Amy	21
	Renato, Rona	25
	Leaf, Jack	42
Dr. Jones	Sierra, Teresa	101
	Dubose, Karen	62
	Reiz, Arthur	24
	Toda, Robert	37
		Total: 224

Invoicing

From the daily logs, you will prepare invoices. Keep copies on file for all invoices you send to clients, and make a note on your calendar when you expect payment. A sample invoice follows.

 <p>Mary Brown Transcription INVOICE</p> <p>375 Rodeo Drive Los Angeles, CA 90010 213.XXX.XXXX mbrown@wirenet.com</p>	<p>Invoice # <input type="text" value="103"/></p>	<p>Date <input type="text" value="August 13, 20xx"/></p>																
	<p>Bill To:</p> <p>_____ Anne Jones, M.D. _____ 2342 Wilshire Blvd. _____ Los Angeles, CA 90013 _____</p>	<p>Type of Service:</p> <p>_____ Transcription Services _____ August 1-12, 20xx _____ _____</p>																
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Cost Per Line</th> <th>Total Lines</th> <th>Cost</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>August 1-6</td> <td>\$0.10</td> <td>2137</td> <td>\$213.70</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 7-12</td> <td>\$0.10</td> <td>3854</td> <td>\$385.40</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: right;">Total</td> <td>\$599.10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Date	Cost Per Line	Total Lines	Cost	August 1-6	\$0.10	2137	\$213.70	August 7-12	\$0.10	3854	\$385.40	Total			\$599.10
Date	Cost Per Line	Total Lines	Cost															
August 1-6	\$0.10	2137	\$213.70															
August 7-12	\$0.10	3854	\$385.40															
Total			\$599.10															

Turnaround Time

On your flyer, advertise a 24-hour turnaround time. This means that you will have the finished reports back to the healthcare provider or hospital within that time frame. Clients do not always require that you have the reports back in 24 hours, but you should offer this to be competitive.

It is now standard practice for a healthcare office to digitally deliver (via computer) voice files to a medical transcriptionist. It is also standard practice for a transcriptionist to digitally deliver completed reports to the healthcare office. However, a transcriptionist who works for a small healthcare client may still visit the client's office to pick up tapes and deliver completed reports. Those who do benefit from keeping a set pick-up and delivery schedule.

An example of a delivery schedule is picking up tapes and delivering reports on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 5 p.m. The schedule, of course, would be discussed as part of the interview for the job. The transcriptionist usually provides pickup and delivery at no extra charge to the client. However, if you work for a healthcare provider who is more than 20 miles from your home, you may want to

reflect this in your line rate to cover expenses for gas and travel time. In addition, courier services are available in most areas. They will provide pickup and delivery for a fee. You may find this service worth the cost if you are especially busy.

Be flexible if the doctor requests a turnaround time of less than 24 hours. You may consider charging him or her a higher rate for this (such as 14 cents versus 12 cents per line) if the shorter turnaround time becomes a regular occurrence. The trend in the medical transcription industry is to have faster and faster turnaround times. This is something to be aware of to remain competitive. Have a goal for yourself to get the work back as quickly as possible to the client at no extra charge. You will make yourself invaluable, and clients will tell others about your quality service.

Liability

Before we move on to an exercise, we'll discuss liability. The question of liability comes up quite a bit, especially if you choose to join the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity (AHDI), formerly the American Association for Medical Transcription (AAMT). A free page of information titled "Professional Liability Insurance" is available at the "Resources" link on the AHDI Web site at www.ahdionline.org. It provides a good summary of the issues to consider when deciding whether to carry liability insurance.

Some U.S. Career Institute graduates don't carry liability insurance. The liability for typing medical reports normally falls on the healthcare provider rather than the transcriptionist. The healthcare provider is responsible for making sure the report is accurate and signs it once accuracy is determined.

Of course, it is your decision as to whether you want to pursue liability insurance. It is not the policy of U.S. Career Institute to influence you one way or another. You must decide what is best for you.

In a moment, we'll wrap up this section. But, first, complete the exercise that follows.

Exercise 9

Answer the following on a separate sheet of paper. It's time to brainstorm some potential clients for your at-home business. Relate your answers to your specific town. In most cases, you will need to do some research to answer the questions accurately. At this stage, you should include everybody you can think of as a potential client.

- 1. Use the Yellow Pages to list all the businesses and organizations that might employ medical transcriptionists.**
- 2. List the people you know who work in the medical field.**

3. Ask your friends, family members and associates from work, church, synagogue, clubs or other organizations if they know of anyone who might need a medical transcriptionist, or if they know anyone who works for a company that might need your services. Ask them to keep you in mind and let you know if they hear about any potential clients for you.
4. In your community, how do you think you might reach individuals who are potential clients? Is there a particular bulletin board everyone seems to check—in a popular grocery store, cafe, library or Laundromat? Are you a member of a church, synagogue, club or other organization that would allow you to let other members know about your skills and services? Could you get permission to post flyers at local employment offices? List every possible source you can think of for clients.
5. List the names and phone numbers of companies that have a medical transcriptionist or office manager you could talk to. If you have a connection—or even if you don't—you can ask to set up an appointment for an informational interview. Many professionals are willing to talk with students and answer their questions about the field.

Review Exercise 9

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers

Summary

You covered a lot of territory in this section, from your letter of introduction and resume to your cover letter and reference list. Just think of the materials you've compiled! Your marketing collateral provides a written and visual presentation of who you are and what you've done. This is what people see before they actually see *you*. Now, before we move on, let's be sure that you're ready for others to see you at your best!

Review the checklist that follows.

- Identify potential employers in your community, and type your letter of introduction. Send the letters and make follow-up calls, continuing these action steps until you have your first interview.
- Type your resume, and have someone else proofread it for you.
- Type a list of four references. Include names, positions, addresses and telephone numbers, as well as a brief statement of how you know each person.
- Make copies of your course outline, and take them with you to interviews and networking opportunities. (This outline can be found on the last page of this manual.) You can present the outline to show that you are well-trained.
- Develop a model cover letter that emphasizes your specific skill areas and personality. Change and add to it to fit each job that you apply for.
- Apply for work at the temporary help agencies in your town. Treat each appointment as if it were a job interview. Take your resume, list of references, course outline and samples of your work, if applicable.
- Apply for jobs through the newspaper classified ads. Send a cover letter with each resume. If you apply for a classified ad job in person, treat the visit as if it were an interview. If possible, take the application home, type it neatly and submit it the next day. Complete the job application very carefully. Reread it for mistakes before you submit it.



Your marketing collateral provides a written and visual presentation of who you are and what you've done. This is what people see before they actually see you.



Keep a positive attitude—potential employers like people who are enthusiastic and confident.

- Apply for jobs online. Use job service Web sites or join professional organizations, and look for employment advertisements on their Web sites or in their publications. Remember to proofread your e-mail, cover letter and resume if you e-mail your materials to a potential employer.
- Interview with a job counselor at your local Job Service office. Enlist the counselor's help to contact potential employers.
- Give yourself an "attitude refresher" when you need it. Keep a positive attitude—potential employers like people who are enthusiastic and confident. You have the skills, and you know how to get a job. You can do it!

Seal the Deal

Learning Objectives

1. Research and prepare for an interview.
2. Assess the behavior and appearance aspects of your professional image, and improve upon them.
3. Outline the typical interview process.
4. Use appropriate body language and verbal and non-verbal communication during an interview.
5. Successfully respond to experiential and behavioral questions during an interview.
6. Form honest, positive responses to difficult and uncomfortable interview questions.

Introduction

You now know how to present yourself on paper with a professional letter of introduction, resume and cover letter. Now it's time to learn how to present yourself in person.

In this section, you'll examine the ins and outs of interviewing so that you can make a great impression and get that job offer. To start, let's read a case study about someone who's well prepared for interviewing and makes a great impression.

Michael's job hunt focused on finding a position in medical billing. He did all the right things: He networked, attended professional association meetings, read trade journals, customized his resume for each position he applied for ... and he always followed up.

It paid off! He just received a phone call from one of the five employers he was most interested in. He has an interview for a position, and Michael is thrilled! He knows anything can happen in an interview, and he wants to be fully prepared. He wants to continue to research the medical office, so he talks to a friend of a friend who's a patient at that office.



You can make a great impression during your interview.

Continued—

He learns as much as he can about the office's culture and the nature of the position. He also thinks about the various questions the potential employer might ask him during the interview and prepares responses to them. Then, he practices those responses until he feels confident of his delivery.

The day of the interview arrives. Michael meets with the department manager, and a few days later, he's invited back. This is a good sign! The second interview is a group interview with the manager Michael met earlier, as well as two of the office's medical billers. Michael feels he's made a good connection with each member of the group. At the end of the interview, the group informs him that he's one of three candidates it's considering and that it plans to make a final decision in a week.

The next day, Michael sends personalized thank-you notes to each of his interviewers. They are true to their word and call within a week with good news—they're extending him an offer. Michael gets the job! He accepts the offer and works out the details of his start date and training on the phone. After he hangs up the phone, Michael can't wait to share the news with the people in his network who supported him during his transition ... especially those individuals who provided him with valuable information about this employer. His job search is complete!

Get Ready for the Interview

Every step you take in your job hunt leads to this moment—the interview. You've done a great job of presenting yourself on paper. Now the employer has decided that you're a candidate that he wants to pursue.

Know that an employer is seriously considering you if you're asked for an interview. The employer already feels you meet the job criteria and now wants to meet you in person to hear more details about what you presented in your resume. The employer also wants to meet you in person to see if you fit the company. After all, if an employer has the choice of one of two people with the same skill set, he'll select the one with the most compatible personality and values.



Every step you've taken in your job hunt leads to this moment—the interview.

The interview is not only a time for the employer to evaluate you; it's also a time for *you* to evaluate the employer. You selected the employer and applied for the job based on sound research. But now it's time to find out if the employer matches what your research indicated. The interview allows you to see the workplace and meet the staff. It also allows you to get a better feel for the company's objectives and decide if you fit in with those objectives. Is the employer really as perfect as you imagined?



Be prepared before you walk through the door of your interview.

However, be prepared before you walk through the door of your interview. You may have to do more research about the company (if you haven't done enough already).

Do Your Research

Before your interview, you need to learn as much as possible about the industry, company and position you're interviewing for. It's also a good idea to find out who will conduct the interview. Sometimes, companies are not well-prepared and won't know ahead of time exactly who will interview you. However, the company should at least be able to tell you the department(s) involved in the interview. You can better anticipate the concerns and the questions that might be asked if you know the departments or types of people who'll be involved in the interview (for example, managers or members of technical staff).

The research you do before your interview can help you get answers to many questions—questions that help you better understand the company, its needs and its culture. We've provided a sample list of research questions you should try to answer before the interview. Of course, you don't have to answer all of them, and some may not be applicable depending on the type or size of your target company. And you can always ask some of these questions during the interview. After all, interviews aren't one-sided affairs. You're allowed to ask questions, too!

Pre-interview Research Questions

1. What's the business climate in the industry? What are the expectations for the future?
2. What technological changes are occurring in the industry, and how do they impact the position, team and company?
3. How large is the company?
4. What is the organizational structure like?
5. How old is the company?
6. What exactly does the company do? What is the company's major business or service?
7. Who are the major competitors?
8. Has anything occurred in the recent news regarding the company or industry?
9. Has there been any change in senior management within the last year? What impact has that had?
10. Is there an annual report available?
11. What part does the available position play in delivering the overall product or service of the company?
12. Is this a new position? If not, what happened to the previous person?
13. Is the company one of the leaders in the field? Is it new in the field? Is it an older company trying to catch up?
14. Which departments or individuals will your success or failure in the position affect most critically?



Interviews aren't one-sided affairs. You're allowed to ask questions, too!

You can use a variety of resources to find out the answers to these questions. Company and industry Web sites are a great place to start. Business librarians can help you navigate directories, trade journals and databases. People in your network may have helpful information or know people who do. And don't forget the direct approach: Call the company to request a brochure, annual report or other marketing collateral.

Armed with your knowledge of the company, you should be able to clearly identify how your abilities, experience and skills can solve an employer's problems and address its needs.

For example, during your pre-interview research, you might learn that the company you're interviewing with has these needs:

- ➔ Increased productivity
- ➔ Greater efficiency
- ➔ Waste reduction
- ➔ Finding solutions
- ➔ Reliable people
- ➔ Innovative and creative ideas

Once you understand what a company needs, it's easy to review your skills and strengths to clearly identify what you have that meets those needs. It's your job in the interview to connect the dots—to communicate how your work in the past relates to the company's needs today.

Keep the company's needs in mind as you complete the following statements:

- ➔ I have a strong knowledge of ...
- ➔ The value I bring to the company is ...
- ➔ My top three achievements are ...
- ➔ What sets me apart from the other candidates is ...
- ➔ My most important skills are ...

At this point, you've researched the company, have a good understanding of what you can offer and feel comfortable communicating exactly how you can make a difference to the company. Now it's time to work on your professionalism. This is another way to distinguish yourself from the competition!

Polish Your Professional Image

You know that the job market is quite competitive. There may be other candidates with similar experience and skills, so how do you set yourself apart from the other applicants during an interview? You do it with your **professionalism**—your ability to demonstrate behavior and personal standards that are appropriate in the business world. Here are several factors that contribute to your professionalism during an interview:



Business librarians can help you navigate directories, trade journals and databases.



Your professionalism is another way to distinguish yourself from the competition!

- ➔ **Dress:** Do you present yourself in a professional manner? Is your style current—neither outdated nor too trendy? Is it appropriate for the employer?
- ➔ **Communication skills:** Are you articulate—can you say what you need to say clearly and succinctly? When you converse, do you know how to pick up cues from your audience members to tell if they're interested? How are your listening skills? Are you able to focus on the speaker without thinking about what you're going to say next? Are you aware of your non-verbal habits? What do they convey about you?
- ➔ **Demeanor:** Do you act in accordance with what's expected in the business world? Do you fall within the norms and standards of appropriate professional behavior?



Do you present yourself in a professional manner?

Does it sound like we're encouraging you to be someone other than yourself? Well, we're not. We want you to be yourself and let your unique skills and personality shine through. However, we want you to do it in a way that won't alienate the people you're trying to impress. The skills and qualities we listed here are what allow people with integrity to come across as a professional and succeed in the business world.

During an interview, a potential employer will evaluate you on qualities that may not even be listed in the job description. A large part of the impression you make on others comes from your professional image. This includes the qualities and characteristics that you demonstrate, as well as the message your physical appearance and presentation deliver.

We'd all like to think that people can look past appearances and see us for who we truly are. However, in the business world, many people lack the time or interest to look below the surface, so they rely on first impressions to help them make decisions. Within the first few seconds, people pass judgment on you based solely on what they can see. Surface clues, such as physical dress, appearance and behavior are all they have to go on. This first impression is more intuitive than rational, and once the first impression is made, it's virtually irreversible!



Remember, it's not just what you know; it's *how* you say it. And how you say it involves both your behavior and your appearance.

Remember, it's not just what you know; it's *how* you say it. And how you say it involves both your behavior and your appearance. Now, let's review some tips on your behavior to ensure you leave a positive first impression during your interview!

Your Behavior

What image do you want to present to people you interact with during your interview? How do you think you come across to others? How do you want those who meet you to describe you? We all see ourselves differently than others see us. Sometimes, we're more critical of ourselves than anyone else. And sometimes, we don't notice flaws that are very obvious to others.

To make a great first impression in business, you need to be aware of verbal and non-verbal behavior. **Verbal behavior** includes your tone of voice, pace of talking (too fast? too slow?), grammar and actual content you share. **Non-verbal** behavior includes your appearance, conduct, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions and body language.

Maybe you're saying, "That's a lot to think about!" However, if you focus on one item at a time, you will eventually develop a professional image that works for you. In fact, it's a good idea to ask a friend or business acquaintance to evaluate you on the various items. Or, ask for coaching from a professional whom you admire. With feedback from others, you can create or fine-tune your professional image to convey those traits that so many people hold in high esteem: trustworthiness, caring, humility and capability.



Non-verbal behavior includes your appearance, conduct, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions and body language.

The first step to gaining professionalism is to assess your professional image:

- ➔ What are the competencies and character traits you want to be known for?
- ➔ What are the standards or expectations for professionalism at the career or job you are pursuing?
- ➔ How do others currently perceive you?
- ➔ Do you care about others' perceptions of you?
- ➔ Can you change your image yourself? Or do you know whom to go to for advice or coaching?

In addition to behavior, appearance is important. Appearance is something that everyone makes snap judgments on.



How do others currently perceive you?

Your Appearance



You've probably heard the expression, "Dress for success." Take it to heart.

Like behavior, appearance affects your professional image. In fact, appearance is often the biggest factor in the impression you make on others. You've probably heard the expression, "Dress for success." Take it to heart. You want to make sure that your clothing conveys confidence and professionalism but is comfortable. It's noticeable to others if you wear something you're uncomfortable in.

Here are some tips to help you look your best for an interview.

- ➔ **Dress up from the norm:** When you interview, dress a little bit better than the folks you see in the company. This means you may have to visit the company just to see what people there wear. Consider a crisp button-up shirt and slacks if the men wear polo shirts and jeans. Try a pants suit or a skirt and blouse if the women wear pants and blouses. The idea is to look a little better than the everyday worker. After all, when people meet you for the first time for a formal or informational interview, they assume that you are dressed your best.
- ➔ **Dress in "business casual:"** This type of clothing is one step down from the traditional two-piece suit. It consists of crisp, neat clothing.
 - For Men
 - ◆ Pressed casual pants in a solid color.
 - ◆ Pressed collared shirt. Do not wear a polo shirt unless you know the environment is casual—maybe the workplace has a dress-down day on Friday.
 - ◆ A tie or jacket isn't necessary.
 - ◆ Do *not* wear athletic shoes.
 - For Women
 - ◆ An appropriate skirt, dress or pants suit.
 - ◆ Casual pants with a blouse, collared shirt or sweater.
 - ◆ Close-toed shoes.
 - ◆ Wear simple jewelry and accessories. Don't overdo it!
- ➔ **Consult the mirror:** Take an objective look in the mirror, and make sure you are clean and well groomed before you leave the house to network or interview.



Wear simple jewelry to an interview.

- ➔ **Hair:** Your hair should be clean and neat. Do not use too much hair product. Some people are sensitive to scents, and the smell of the product may bother them. Dry your hair completely—do not go to any meeting with damp hair.
- ➔ **Shoes:** Make sure your shoes are polished.
- ➔ **Clothing condition:** Make sure there are no missing buttons and no lint! Don't forget to remove external tags and tacking stitches from new clothes. Clothes should be clean, neatly pressed and fit properly—not too tight and not too baggy.
- ➔ **Nails:** You should have clean fingernails.
- ➔ **Scent:** Use perfume or cologne sparingly or not at all. Don't smell like smoke.
- ➔ **Portfolio:** Carry a leather folio or binder to store your resumes and a pad of paper for notes. You can also carry a professional-looking tote bag or soft-sided briefcase. A hard-sided briefcase may be overkill. Don't carry a book bag into a meeting or an interview.

Tip!

“Business casual” may not be appropriate if you're interviewing with a company whose employees dress very formally. If you checked out the workplace and the dress is formal, consider a suit and tie for men or a pants suit, suit or business dress and jacket for women.



Make sure you have clean fingernails for your job interview.

Remember, you're not trying to impress people with your fashion sense. You just don't want your clothing or appearance to distract people from what you say. How will people take you seriously if you dress in baggy pants or a skintight dress? How will people respect you if your hair is greasy or you wear too much makeup? You want people to remember *you*, not what you wear!

The Handshake

Last but not least, don't forget the handshake. When you meet someone, the best way to make a good first impression is to shake hands. This should be a nice, firm handshake, not a limp-wristed extension of your hand or a bone-crushing grip. Practice with friends if you're not used to shaking hands. Your friends should feel your grip but not be in pain because of it.



When you meet someone, the best way to make a good first impression is to shake hands.

If your friends tell you that your handshake is too soft, try to tense your lower arm from elbow to wrist to put some muscle into it—but don't just squeeze harder. If your friends tell you that your handshake is too rough, firmly embrace the other person's hand—don't squeeze it tightly.

When you feel good about your professional image—how you act and look—you feel much more confident about yourself, and that confidence comes through!

Take some time now to evaluate your professional image with an exercise.

Exercise 10

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper. These questions will help you honestly evaluate your professional behavior and appearance.

1. **What kind of changes do you need to make to your professional image? Consider all aspects that we described: dress, presentation, communication, grooming and demeanor.**
2. **Who's a good role model for you when it comes to professional image? Describe him or her—both behavior and appearance.**
3. **Try your handshake on several friends and strangers. Ask for some feedback regarding your posture, smile and grip when you shake hands.**

Review Exercise 10

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Get Familiar with the Interview Process

Now that you feel more comfortable with the company and your professional image, it's time to gain confidence in the interview process *before* it actually happens. After all, the more prepared you are, the more positive you'll feel.

A great testament to your job-hunt skills is when a potential employer asks you to interview for a position. The employer is impressed with your resume and marketing collateral and wants to meet you in person! The interview will test your skills in a new way. A typical interview process might include two or three interview meetings. It's a long process, and it can be stressful. While there is a large variation from one interview to another, most interviews follow a certain sequence.



A great testament to your job-hunt skills is when a potential employer asks you to interview for a position.

Traditionally, an interview begins with the hiring manager. The interview could last anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour. In rare cases, the manager may try to meet with all the candidates in the same day and will schedule them back-to-back that day. You might even run into other candidates while you wait in the lobby.

The manager you interview with will know the position you're interviewing for and will ask you questions that relate directly to your experience and ability to do the job. She may also screen for fit—will you be a good fit for the team and the organization? Do you embody the company's standards and values?

You might move on to meet with a couple coworkers after you meet with the hiring manager. The coworkers will probably ask you more detailed questions about the specifics of the job responsibilities and try to judge if you'd fit their team.

Some companies conduct interviews in a group or panel setting where several people from the organization interview you at one time. This can be stressful because you might sit across from four or five people. However, treat this type of interview as a conversation with multiple individuals. Scan the room, and make eye contact with each person. If you accidentally overlook or don't give attention to one person on the panel, he'll notice and point it out after you leave. Shake hands with each person as you enter and leave the room.



Some companies conduct interviews in a group or panel setting where several people from the organization interview you at one time.

You did your research, have your professional image under control and have an overall understanding of the interview process. Now, it's time to answer three simple questions:

1. Why do I want this job?
2. What experiences, skills and value can I bring to this company?
3. How am I equipped to handle the nature of this position?

Once you feel completely confident about your answers, you're ready for your interview!

Interview Checklist

Be prepared! Before your interview:

- ➔ **Confirm:** A few days beforehand, confirm the time and location of the interview. Ask for directions if needed. Ask who'll attend the interview. Be sure to arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- ➔ **Get supplies:** Gather the supplies that you need. Bring your resume (enough for all interviewers), reference list, cover letter and a pad of paper for notes.
- ➔ **Determine what you are going to wear:** Do you have everything you need to complete your interview outfit? Dress conservatively and professionally. Choose dark or neutral colors—nothing too trendy or outrageous. A general rule of thumb is to dress as well or better than the person who will interview you. And make sure you feel comfortable with what you wear. If it's a new outfit, you might want to wear it around the house a bit to get used to how it looks and feels.
- ➔ **Review your accomplishments:** Prepare and review your action-results stories and examples. Now that you know more about the employer and the position, select several examples that are relevant to their needs. Write key words on sticky notes, and put them in your portfolio to jog your memory during the interview.



A few days beforehand, confirm the time and location of the interview.

The legwork you put in prior to an interview will definitely pay off. You'll have the confidence to "walk your talk," and express a genuine interest and enthusiasm about what the company does, the nature of the open position and what you can do for the company.

The Phone Interview



It's quite possible that you'll participate in at least one phone interview.

It's quite possible that you'll participate in at least one phone interview. When an employer receives large volumes of resumes, he may choose to conduct an initial or screening phone interview. If you receive such a call, treat it like a formal interview, and prepare for it as we discussed.

It's a good idea to call a friend and ask for feedback about the quality of your phone and your tone of voice to prepare for a phone interview. You want to sound as upbeat, enthusiastic, interested and clear as possible. You may not recognize any room for improvement in your voice until you get objective feedback from a friend.

During a phone interview, make sure you're in a quiet place and that you use a high-quality telephone. If you're on a cell phone, make sure that you get good reception and that your battery isn't going to die in the middle of the conversation. We also recommend that you stand up and smile during a phone interview. Research shows that your voice carries better and that you're more likely to demonstrate enthusiasm in this position.



Stand up and smile during a phone interview. Research shows that your voice carries better and that you're more likely to demonstrate enthusiasm in this position.

You won't have visual cues to tell you how the person on the other end of the line is reacting to you during a phone interview. You'll have to rely on your listening abilities to pick up other cues. Listen to the person's questions, and take time to think through your answers. Don't worry about taking a moment to gather your thoughts for a response. There's nothing wrong with a little silence on the phone. However, since the interviewer can't see you thinking, make sure to let her know that you need a second or two to consider the question.

The company will invite you for an in-person interview if you pass the phone interview. The employer will typically ask if you're available for a specific time and day. If possible, select a time when everyone (yourself included) will be more alert.

The In-person Interview: The Moment of Truth

Now comes the big event—the in-person interview. This is where you make a personal impression on everyone, and you want that impression to be as positive as possible.

Interview Appearance and Body Language

Your appearance and body language communicate a lot to the employer about yourself. Right from the start, be aware of the signals that you send. Make eye contact, smile warmly, extend your hand and offer a firm handshake when the interviewer greets you. This tells the interviewer you're confident and happy to be there.



At the start of your job interview, offer a firm handshake.

Work your way around the table or room if you're in a formal job interview and there are several people involved. Greet each person where he or she is seated. Don't reach across the table to shake hands. At the end of the meeting, shake hands with each individual again, and thank each one by name. This actually helps you learn names.

Establish a positive tone as soon as possible. Start with a little small talk while the interviewer or receptionist walks you to the meeting room. Perhaps you can make a comment about the weather, the weekend or something *not* work-related to break the ice. Keep the small talk brief, and don't overdo it.

Next, keep in mind that many interviewers are not comfortable in their role. In most companies, the people you'll talk to are not professional interviewers and do not conduct interviews on a regular basis. Sometimes, they're brought in at the last minute and feel unprepared. Technical people may be naturally introverted and analytical, so it's quite uncomfortable for them to interview. You'll feel more comfortable and come across as friendly and cooperative if *you* can help make your *interviewers* feel comfortable.

Now, let's discuss some tips on body language. During the interview, lean forward slightly as you listen, and nod in agreement. Sometimes, it can help put interviewers at ease if you subtly mimic them. For example, if one interviewer leans in and puts his hands on the table when he asks you a question, you can do the same when you answer. Be aware of your hands and arms. You can fold your hands when you listen but not your arms—folded arms make you look defensive. Avoid the obvious signs of nervousness, such as tapping a pen, wiggling your leg or shaking your foot.

Be aware of your voice tone and volume. You can deliberately vary your tone and volume to avoid speaking in a monotone. You can also use mild hand gestures to demonstrate excitement. Be willing to laugh and show a sense of humor. It's a good way to relieve tension, but don't get carried away.

Be aware of the interviewer's body language. You've lost her attention if your interviewer is shuffling papers or looking away. In this case, change your approach. Do something different to draw the interviewer back in—change your voice inflection, smile or ask a question. Listen closely, and avoid thinking about your response while an interviewer asks a question. Your interviewers can tell when you're not listening; they will find it annoying. Always let the interviewer finish. Then respond. Pay attention to your responses, and make sure they're clear and to the point. People often get long-winded when they're nervous. You lose your interviewer's attention and leave the impression that you can't communicate clearly and succinctly if your responses are too lengthy.

All in all, during the interview, you should aim to be yourself. Be honest and thoughtful. You want your interviewers to see the real you in the best light possible so they can decide if you're a fit for the company. If you present a false front and the false front is a fit, what's going to happen when the real you eventually comes out? You can't control whether you'll fit the company, but you can make sure the person the interviewers see is the real you.



Avoid the obvious signs of nervousness during a job interview, such as tapping a pen, wiggling your leg or shaking your foot.

What to Say

During the interview, you need to communicate that you're someone who can solve the problems the company faces and successfully perform your job duties. The company wouldn't look for someone if it didn't have problems to solve and work to be done!

Your answers must address the needs of the company and show why you're the best candidate for the job. The goal of the interview is to get an offer—or at least a second interview. In reality, most offers are extended after a second interview rather than a first. But if you get an offer after the first interview...congratulations!



During the interview, you need to communicate that you're someone who can solve the problems the company faces and successfully perform your job duties.

The second interview gives your interviewers a chance to learn even more details about your abilities. It also gives them a chance to challenge you with specific situations relevant to the new position, to determine your fit and to see if any discrepancies exist between the first and second interviews. Are your responses consistent, and does your behavior indicate you'd be a fit?

Listen and Answer

Some interviewers may provide you with a list of questions as you sit down for the interview. This is helpful to refer to if you get stuck or can't remember an entire question. However, most interviewers will simply ask you verbal questions without providing you with a printed list.

This means it's important to listen. Make sure you aren't thinking about your response while you listen to the question, and don't interrupt. When you answer, make sure you respond directly to the question; do not wander off on tangents. Some questions might have multiple parts, so be sure to address each part.



Be sure to listen to each question during the job interview—do not interrupt.

If you're unclear about the question, make a statement, such as, "I'm not sure I understand what you're asking. Could you restate the question?" If you're not sure that your answer addresses the question, ask a follow-up question, such as, "Does that give you the information you were looking for?" or "I'm not sure if I answered your question adequately. Do you need more details?"

As you answer questions, use action-oriented words, and weave the following phrases into your answers to show you're a "can do" type of person:

- ➔ "Here's what I can do for you ..."
- ➔ "I am able to ..."
- ➔ "I am willing to ..."
- ➔ "I look forward to ..."

During this interview process, provide examples of your accomplishments to sell yourself. However, consider this a "soft sell." You're not trying to force your interviewers to believe you and hire you; simply present the facts as you see them to help your interviewers understand how you can help them.

Avoid Mistakes

During the interview, be prepared to address any weaknesses you have. You can be truthful and still make a good impression. Own up if you're asked to share a mistake you've made or a weakness you have. However, answer in a way that shows what you learned as a result, how it's made you a better person and how it won't happen again. Or, turn your weakness into a hidden talent. Maybe you have a tendency to question decisions, but your questions end up uncovering problems and preventing disasters. Now it's no longer a weakness but a hidden talent!



During the interview, be prepared to address any weaknesses you have.

During the interview, you may become aware that you don't exactly meet the job requirements. However, you can still work this to your advantage. For example, let's say a job requires proficiency in a certain software system, and you're only somewhat familiar with the software. Confidently describe your skill level, and explain that you're a fast learner and plan to improve your proficiency.

Throughout the interview process, strive to maintain a positive tone. Do not make negative comments or mention anything negative about your previous employer or experiences. Keep your statements upbeat.

Lastly, never bring up salary or benefits during the first interview. This type of information is typically discussed during the second interview or after you receive a job offer. The main purpose of a first interview is to find out how well you can address the employer's needs—and salary and benefits are your needs, not the employer's.

If the employer does happen to bring up salary during the interview, remember the primary rule of negotiation: Do *not* be the first person to state a dollar amount. If you're asked to state your salary requirements, stall—deflect the topic and ask to discuss it later. You might say, "I'm sure my needs are in the range you're offering, and I'll be happy to discuss them when we pursue a formal offer."

If pressed for a salary, stress that salary is not the key issue because you realize that companies of different sizes in different industries vary in compensation. You can also indicate what you earned in your last position (do not lie). Or, you could turn your response into a question: “Given the responsibilities of this position and the potential to increase business for the company, what do you feel this position is worth?” Salary should be discussed only in the final stages of interviewing or after there is an offer on the table.

Now let’s look at specific questions that a potential employer might ask, objections that may arise and questions you might want to ask during an interview.

Questions and Objections

Remember, an interview is *not* a one-way street. The interviewers will ask you questions, but you can also ask them questions. We’ll now discuss how to answer experience-based and behavior-based questions, how to handle objections and how to ask questions of the employer.



Remember, an interview is *not* a one-way street.

Questions about Your Experience

To help you prepare for the interview, you need to understand the different types of questions that the employer might ask. There is a strategy for answering. Not only is the content important (*what* you say), but *how* you deliver your responses is crucial, as well. The more you prepare, the more effective you will be during the interview.

The following are traditional **experience-based interview questions**—questions used through the years to understand a candidate’s experience and to discover what he has to offer. We provided suggestions on how to respond to each one. However, no single interviewer will ever ask you all of these questions.

- ➔ **Tell me about yourself.** This is an open-ended question. Do the interviewers want to know about your professional background, your personal life or both? Your response should be a broad overview that summarizes both professional and personal aspects of yourself. Don’t provide too much personal detail. You might discuss where you grew up, where you went to school and maybe some hobbies or interests you have. On the professional side, you might provide a summary of your career history, and state your competencies that relate to the current position.

Close your response with a statement that captures why you’re interested in this position. For example, “I want to advance my career in home inspection and believe that I can contribute to ABC Company’s goals with my effective people- and project-management skills.” Keep your overall response to one or two minutes. Your response should grab their interest. You can provide further details throughout the rest of the interview.



If pressed for a salary during the interview, stress that salary is not the key issue because you realize that companies of different sizes in different industries vary in compensation.

- ➔ **Why did you leave your last position?** You probably already responded to this question as you networked. Keep your response brief and positive. If you say your previous employer was not a fit for you, make sure to state why you believe the company you're interviewing with *is* a fit. If you made a mistake on a previous job, explain how you corrected things. Your honesty and accountability will be well received. For example, you could say, "My skills and interests were not really the best match for the company. The company realized it, and so did I. I now know that I succeed when my work really taps into my skills, including ..." (Now, state your strengths and how they fit into your potential employer's needs).
- ➔ **Why do you believe you're qualified for this position?** State your relevant skills, experience and education. Provide examples of accomplishments that directly relate to the job.
- ➔ **What are your strengths?** Focus on three to five strengths that are relevant to the position you're interviewing for. Relate your strengths to the needs of the position. For example, suppose one of your strengths is being detail-oriented, and you know the position involves reviewing reports and budgets. You can explain how being detail-oriented would make you highly effective with this new responsibility.
- ➔ **What is a weakness of yours?** This is not a trick question. The interviewer wants to see if you're a self-aware person. Select a weakness that is not too drastic or directly relevant to the job. Or, take a strength you have, and turn it upside down. For example, if your strength is being quality-oriented, you might say, "I'm very quality-oriented, so people sometimes think I'm a perfectionist because I want to correct small errors. However, I've learned to take a step back and focus on the most important things first. Now, when time is short, I can let small things slide that won't have an impact on the customer or final product."

End your response on a positive note; mention how you became aware of your "weakness" and what you're doing to work with it or overcome it. The interviewer wants to make sure you are not rigid and know how to change when necessary.
- ➔ **What did you like most about your previous job?** State factors that are relevant to the job you're interviewing for. Your answer can also help your interviewers "connect the dots." You can help them understand what you liked in the past and how that relates to the job you're interviewing for. For example, suppose a small part of your last job involved working with customers and helping them solve problems. Tell your interviewers how much you enjoyed working with customers in the past, even though you didn't get to do so very often. Then share how excited you are to have the opportunity to work with customers on a regular basis—in the job you are interviewing for.
- ➔ **What did you like the least?** Respond with something that's not too relevant to the job you're interviewing for. Minimize your answer, and relate your enthusiasm for the job you are interviewing for. However, if you know there's an aspect of your personality that will positively "shriveled up and die" in a certain job environment, you'd better let your interviewers know. It's better that they find out now that it drives you crazy to work without human interaction for eight hours a day. Otherwise, they'll find out after you accept the job—and quit one month later!

The two questions, “What did you like most?” and “What did you like least?” help the interviewers better grasp your personality. This helps them determine if you’re a fit for the job.

- ➔ **What would your previous supervisor say about you?** Recall statements that your manager or supervisor said to you or made notes of in your performance reviews. Give examples of situations when your supervisor recognized your contributions, and relate them to the skills you exhibited.
- ➔ **What do you see yourself doing five years from now?** The interviewer is trying to determine the kinds of personal and professional goals you have. He wants to see if you’re interested in growth and willing to take on new challenges. He’s also probing to see if you’ll stay with the company if you’re hired. Your response should cover both personal and professional goals, but nothing too personal. Think about some of the goals you explored previously in this kit. Which goals might be relevant to share in an interview?
- ➔ **Why have you changed jobs so frequently?** This question may come up in response to the job history in your resume. Point out when the job changes were voluntary. Perhaps they were due to promotions, increased responsibilities or new assignments. Share what you learned at each position and how each one prepared you for a new set of challenges. Point out that poor performance was never an issue. In fact, you performed so well that you were highly sought out for new positions.

If your job changes were not voluntary (for example, you were laid off or fired), be prepared to take ownership of your mistakes. Share how you’ve grown and how the experience made you a better employee.

- ➔ **Describe the major accomplishments of your last position.** Select three action-results statements relevant to the job you’re interviewing for. Use the formula $P + A = R$ (problem + action = results). Really focus on the results you achieved for the company and the skills that produced those results.
- ➔ **What is the last book you read?** This sounds like an odd question, but some interviewers like to depart from the traditional job-related questions. They think they can learn more about you if they ask this question. A question like this forces you to think quickly and respond with something appropriate.

Try to select a book that is not too controversial or political. Briefly share how the book affected you or what you learned from it. Your response gives the interviewer an indication of your personality and your interests. This helps her determine if you’re a fit for the team and the company.



An interviewer might ask what book you last read.

Here are other questions that the interviewer might ask you. Spend some time writing down your responses so that you are comfortable with these questions.

- ➔ Why do you want to work here?
- ➔ Why should I hire you?
- ➔ What courses/seminars have you taken lately?
- ➔ Describe a management style that works for you.
- ➔ What community activities are you involved with?
- ➔ If offered the job, when could you begin?

Interviewers will not only ask you questions about your experience, they will also ask questions about your behavior and attitudes. After all, they want someone who'll fit into their culture.

Questions about Your Behavior and Attitude

Interviewers frequently use **behavior-style questions** to evaluate candidates. These questions help potential employers look at your behavior and attitudes. An interviewer who asks these types of questions believes that the best indicator of your future behavior is your past behavior. She wants examples from your past of how you behaved or handled yourself on the job. These examples help predict how you might handle yourself in the future.

Behavior-style questions often start with this leading statement, "Tell me about a time when..." If you hear something like this, the interviewer wants to hear about past situations and how they relate to future actions in the new job. The leading statement will often end with a skill that the interviewer deems vital to success on the job. For example, "Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure." This statement indicates what skill is important to the interviewer—working effectively under pressure.



Interviewers frequently use behavior-style questions to evaluate candidates.

To successfully respond to this type of statement, you must offer a tangible example. Select a situation that most accurately represents your experience with the skill that the interviewer mentioned.

Briefly describe the situation, share how you handled it and emphasize the results or outcome. Use the "P + A = R" (Problem + Action = Results) formula. Then state how that experience relates to the job you're interviewing for.

Some questions may seem negative in nature. For example, "Tell me about a failure," or "Tell me about a mistake." Don't dwell on the negative if the interviewer asks such questions. Instead, put a positive spin on things. State what you learned from the experience, and explain how it's prepared you for the job you're interviewing for.

Following is a lengthy list of common behavior-style questions that you might receive. Before an interview, evaluate which skills are most important to the job, and anticipate the behavior-style questions that a potential employer might ask. Prepare some written responses. Then practice them out loud. No single interviewer will ever ask you *all* of these questions.

Tell me about a time when you...

1. Demonstrated your expertise with....
2. Worked effectively under pressure.
3. Handled a difficult situation with a coworker.
4. Solved a problem in a creative way.
5. Missed an obvious solution to a problem.
6. Were unable to complete a project on time.
7. Persuaded team members to do things your way.
8. Wrote a report that was well received.
9. Anticipated potential problems, and developed preventative measures.
10. Had to make an important decision with limited facts.
11. Were forced to make an unpopular decision.
12. Had to adapt to a difficult situation.
13. Were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.
14. Were disappointed in your behavior.
15. Used your political savvy to push through a program that you really believed in.
16. Had to deal with an irate customer.
17. Delegated a project effectively.
18. Surmounted a major obstacle.
19. Set your sights too high (or too low).
20. Prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
21. Got bogged down in the details of a project.
22. Lost (or won) an important contract.
23. Made a bad decision.
24. Hired (or fired) the wrong person.



Before an interview, evaluate which skills are most important to the job, and anticipate the behavior-style questions that a potential employer might ask. Then prepare some written responses.



Take a deep breath, and don't respond immediately to a confrontational question or statement from an interviewer.

Handle Objections

During the interview, you may face potential objections from interviewers, so be prepared. They might challenge an answer that you give. For example, an interviewer might say, "I don't think you have the right educational background for our needs." How will you handle this kind of verbal confrontation?

First, you need to understand where the interviewer's coming from. Perhaps she's worried that you can't handle the job and needs further clarification from you. She may want to see how you handle confrontation. If you can't handle these challenges, the interview process is over.

Take a deep breath, and don't respond immediately to a confrontational question or statement from an interviewer. When you do respond, don't be defensive. Instead, try to address the interviewer's underlying concern rather than her visible emotion. Remember, there's always some real concern behind the most aggressive or angry statement. Attempt to filter out the emotion you hear in the interviewer's voice, and get to the heart of the matter. Show genuine interest in learning more from her.

Clarify what the interviewer is really objecting to. To do so, ask some questions. For example, in response to the earlier statement about your educational background, you might ask, "Could you tell me where my education does not appear to match your needs?" Get more information so that you can better address the concern.

Perhaps the interviewer will respond, "Well, everyone in the department has an associate's degree in accounting, and I'm concerned that you won't be able to keep up."

With this new information in mind, you can now formulate a proactive statement about your experience and background. The statement must demonstrate how you have been able to keep up with your colleagues and maybe even outshine them. In this situation, you might share examples of your positive experiences with teammates and how your certificate course helped you to go above and beyond the call of duty. Overall, your response should demonstrate a positive attitude, and you need to be calm when you deliver it. This shows an interviewer that you know how to handle pressure and confrontation.

Ask Questions of the Employer

Now that you've survived the interviewer's questions, it's your turn to ask the questions. This is your chance to learn more about the company and the position, as well as demonstrate that you did your homework. Make sure you have thoughtful, meaningful questions. After all, the interviewers are still evaluating you, and you want the questions to reflect your genuine interest in the position.



Now that you've survived the interviewer's questions, it's your turn to ask the questions. This is your chance to learn more about the company and the position, as well as demonstrate that you did your homework.

Formulate questions based on what is relevant to the company and to the nature of the interview. Ask questions that help you determine if the company and job are a good fit for you!

Applicant questions typically fall into the following categories. You don't need to ask all of these questions—just ask ones that really concern you.

Company/Department/Office

1. What is the company's plan for the next five years, and how does this department fit in?
2. What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
3. What are the characteristics of a successful person in your organization?
4. What characteristics do you value most in an employee?
5. Please describe the culture of the company.
6. How is performance measured, and how is successful performance rewarded?
7. What is the management style of the company as a whole? This department?

Position

1. What kind of work can I expect to do the first year?
2. What do you think is the greatest challenge in this position?
3. Why is this position open at this time?
4. What are your immediate objectives and priorities for this position?
5. What level of support does this position receive to meet the objectives?
6. Where does this position fit within your organization?
7. How does this position contribute to the organization's mission?
8. Would I work closely with others or mostly independently?
9. What changes, if any, do you see happening in this area?
10. What should the new hire accomplish during the first six months on the job?

Retention

1. What are your retention rates?
2. What are the top reasons people stay? Leave?
3. What is the retention rate of people in this position? Where do they go?
4. What happened to the last person who was in this position?

Development

1. What type of training will I receive in my first year?
2. How much guidance or assistance is available to individuals in developing career goals? How often is this done?
3. How does this organization support professional growth?

Performance Management

1. Describe the performance management process.
2. How do performance reviews occur? With whom do they occur?
3. What happens to people that perform below expectations?

We've shared a number of questions you should ask. Now, here are some questions you're probably burning to ask but should *not* until *after* you receive a job offer.

Questions NOT to ask

1. How much does this job pay?
2. Are the hours the same each day, or are they flexible?
3. How much vacation do I get?
4. Do you have health, vision or education benefits?
5. Do you have a 401 (k) plan?
6. How often do I talk to my manager?
7. How often do I get feedback on my performance?
8. What happens after my probationary period?
9. How are raises determined?
10. What is your advancement policy?
11. Will you pay relocation expenses?
12. Does the company pay for any type of training?
13. Have there been problems with this job in the past?
14. May I talk to other employees in this department?*

* This is an excellent question to ask if you have any hesitation about the position. Talking to other employees gives you a chance to find out what it's really like to work for the company. Of course, it's best to talk to employees before the interview, during your pre-interview research!

At the end of the interview, ask the interviewer if he sees a good fit between your background and the role. If the response is positive, reaffirm your interest, and ask about the next step—what's the process for selecting a final candidate, and when can you expect to hear from the company?

If the interviewer shows concern about your fit for the role, ask what the concerns are. Re-address your qualifications as they apply to the concerns. You're essentially overcoming objections before you exit the interview. Once you leave, it's too late!

What About References?

At the end of the interview, you may get a request for references from the interviewer. If this happens, offer to e-mail or deliver the names and contact information. Or, you can provide the list of references you already prepared. However, you'll have time to contact your references and give them a heads up that someone will be calling to ask questions about you if you e-mail or deliver the names. Don't forget to provide your references with copies of the job description and the resume.

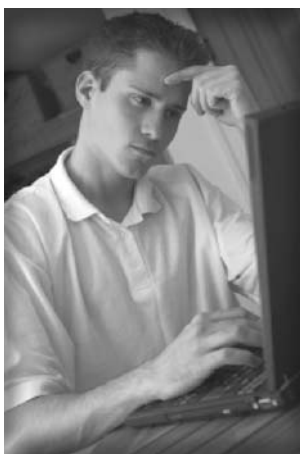
For example, you might call one of your references and say, "Joe, I just interviewed at the ABC Healthcare Office for a medical transcription position. I gave your name as a reference, and I believe Mr. Jones will call you. I know they're very interested in switching to EHRs. Would you be comfortable mentioning the success that I had in working with EHRs for your company?" Or you might call another reference to say, "The interviewer asked a lot of questions about my management experience. Do you think you could mention how I worked with you to develop a performance plan to meet your goals?"



You'll have time to contact your references and give them a heads up that someone will be calling to ask questions about you if you e-mail or deliver your reference information to the interviewer.

After the Interview

Whew! The interview is finally over. But there's still more to do. Every interview is a chance for you to clarify your needs and evaluate whether a company can meet them. It's time to go home and think about what you've learned. But before you leave the interview, ask what the next step is. Ask for a date by which you can expect to hear from the company.



When you get home from a job interview, evaluate how well you did.

When you get home, evaluate how well you did. Jot some notes about what you discussed and any additional thoughts or questions you have. Which questions did you handle well? Which questions were you unprepared for? What improvements could you make for the next interview? Write down the questions you had difficulty answering, and try them again by yourself. In fact, it's a good idea to ask a few friends or colleagues in your networking group to listen to your responses.

Now, it's time to follow up. To start, send a hand-written thank-you note to your interviewer. If there were multiple interviewers on the panel, send a single note addressed to all of them, or write *individual* (unique) notes to each interviewer. In each note, express your interest again, and emphasize your strengths that match the job.



A follow-up call after a job interview is one more chance to keep your name in front of the decision-makers.

What should you do next? After the interview is complete, don't sit around waiting for a phone call and a job offer—no matter how many good signs you got from the interviewer. Even the most encouraging interviews may not turn into offers. Instead, keep networking, and work on getting your next interview!

Know that you did a good job and that it's just a matter of time before your efforts will pay off. If you don't hear back from the company by the date it mentioned, politely follow up with a phone call within a few days of that date. Your intention is to continue to express your interest and demonstrate your initiative. Your follow-up call is one more chance to keep your name in front of the decision-makers.

If you still don't hear back, let it go, and move on. Some potential employers never let you know that they've hired someone else—certainly not the most professional behavior, but a fact of life. You might be surprised to get a letter from them in the mail months later. Or you might get a call down the road asking if you're still interested. Perhaps the person they hired didn't work out, or maybe they had to put the hiring process on hold. Whatever the reason, if you haven't already accepted some other position and are still interested, you may want to reconsider the position.

Through time, your interviewing abilities will become better and better. Like any activity, practice makes perfect!

Practice Makes Perfect

If you were a professional football player, you wouldn't go into a game without practice, right? Well, the same goes for interviewing. Your future career depends on how well you communicate what you have to offer during an interview. Don't wait until your actual interview to practice your communication skills—practice ahead of time.

Here are some tips:

- 1. Write down your answers to interview questions that you think are most relevant to an upcoming interview.** Make sure to write your responses the way you'd say them out loud. Keep your sentences short, and include key words that are easy to remember. In an interview, use these key words to trigger your memory. You won't be able to remember your prepared responses if they are too long and complicated.

➔ **Always word your answers in a positive way.**

- Avoid negative statements. Tell the interviewer what you can do, not what you can't do. Reword the question when necessary.
- Don't: I can't do that kind of work. I've never done it before.
- Do: I've worked with several types of accounting software, and I learn new things very quickly. I'm sure I could do it.



If you were a professional football player, you wouldn't go into a game without practice, right?

➔ **Keep your answers short but complete—avoid lengthy explanations.**

- Don't: Well, we only have one car in the family, and last week the brakes went out. It's an old car and . . .
- Do: I will be able to get to work on time.

➔ **Keep the discussion businesslike—don't get into personal problems or details.**

- Don't: I can't work after regular hours on Thursday afternoons. I have to take the kids to Little League and Cub Scouts.
- Do: I can work overtime every day except Thursday afternoons.

➔ **Give fuller answers than “yes” or “no.”**

- For example, if you were asked, “Do you have any dental-assistant experience with children?”
- Don't: Yes.
- Do: Yes, I am familiar with checking eruption patterns on children and pre-teens.

➔ **Be positive, and speak with enthusiasm and conviction.**

- For example, if the interviewer asks, “Do you have any actual experience aside from your training?” one response would be: “The work I did in my course was all practical and realistic. This will be my first job as a home inspector, but I have experience being a responsible employee” (or substitute whatever phrase is appropriate to your previous work and volunteer experience).
- Or if the interviewer says, “I only hire people with experience,” you could respond: “I understand your reservations, but I know that I am qualified. Here is an outline of the in-depth course I completed. The work I did in my course was based on real wedding- and event-planning scenarios. I know I can do a great job for you. I would gladly do a working interview for one day so that you can see that I do have the skills that I need for this job.” Or you could say: “I have been successful in all of my previous employment experiences. I have excellent references.” Don't forget that you are a trained professional with valuable skills to offer. The interview is a two-way interaction!

2. Practice your answers out loud with a partner.

Don't worry if things sound funny or scripted. It will get easier and more natural with time.

3. Use your networking meetings as a chance to practice some of your interview responses.

Your networking contacts may ask you the same kind of questions your interviewers ask you.



Practice for your job interviews!

4. **Sign up for a career-counselor or employment-center-sponsored interviewing workshop in your area.** The workshop will give you a chance to practice your responses and share strategies for difficult questions. You'll also learn from others' experiences.
5. **Videotape yourself.** This might sound terribly painful, but it is incredibly helpful. Ask a colleague or an experienced interviewer to conduct a mock interview, and record it. Your videotape can provide you with valuable feedback when you replay it.



Ask a colleague or an experienced interviewer to conduct a mock interview, and record it. Your videotape can provide you with valuable feedback when you replay it.

Now it's time for some interview preparation.

Exercise 11

This exercise gives you a chance to think about the various questions that an interviewer might ask and the answers you'd give. Complete the following tasks on a separate piece of paper.

1. **Recall a previous interview experience. What went well? Which questions were you unprepared for? What could you have done better?**
2. **Choose three traditional experience-based questions to respond to. Write your answers, and practice saying the answers out loud.**
3. **Choose three behavioral-style questions to respond to. Write your answers, and practice saying the answers out loud.**
4. **What is one interview question you are most worried about? Write a good answer, and practice saying that answer out loud.**
5. **Imagine you're interviewing for your "ideal job." Write the five questions that an interviewer might ask you, as well as your answers. Note: Some of these questions may be the same as questions you identified in items 2, 3 and 4.**
6. **Ask yourself what you need to know about a company before you would accept a job offer from it. Now, write down the questions you would have to ask to gain this knowledge.**

Review Exercise 11

Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this kit. Many of the questions are personal, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Summary

You've practiced, you've interviewed and you've followed up. Now what? A job offer, of course! Congratulations! Your hard work, career exploration, networking and employment hunt have paid off.

This Career Starter Kit presented you with many ideas and techniques to conduct an effective job search. Think of all that you learned! We're sure you've grown as you've conducted career exploration, marketed yourself on paper and sold yourself in person.

As we wrap up, we want to remind you that your career is an opportunity to share your skills and talents with the world, express yourself and be paid in the process. It's also a chance to grow and evolve. Your career is not static—it's always evolving, just as you are.

With the career development skills you've gained, you're ready to go out in the world and make your mark. We look forward to hearing from you and are anxious to answer any further questions you have. We wish you the best of success!

Answer Key

Exercise 1

1. What factors are motivating you to start a career or make a career change?

Examples might include:

- ➔ **Opportunity to learn new skills**
- ➔ **Opportunity for growth**
- ➔ **Opportunity to earn more money**
- ➔ **Change in situation/life**

Consider which of these reasons reflect your current situation. What other reasons did you think of?

2. Review the six criteria for people who are successful at changing careers. Identify the criteria that address your strengths and those that present challenges. If a strength, explain the reason; if a challenge, suggest how you might improve upon it. **Your responses will vary but should address each of the following criteria:**

- ➔ **Open to new ideas and possibilities**
- ➔ **Ask for help and support**
- ➔ **Have the support of loved ones**
- ➔ **Creative problem-solvers**
- ➔ **Willing to take risks**
- ➔ **Done their homework**

Just make sure you discuss which are your strengths and which are your challenges, and indicate why or how you might improve upon them.

3. Will being your own career boss be challenging for you? Why?
4. How can you work to be a better career boss for yourself? **Your responses should identify any areas of weakness and brainstorm specific ways to improve. For example, you might say, “I have a hard time managing my time when I feel overwhelmed.” Your improvement idea might read, “I need to recognize when I’m overwhelmed. I will take a moment for myself when this happens. Also, I will write down everything that is overwhelming me. Then, I will prioritize those tasks so that I can see where to focus my efforts. When possible, I will delegate tasks to other people.”**

Exercise 2

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should now have some ideas about how other people found their jobs, as well as a sense of the business climate in your community. You may also have tapped the “hidden” job market through your networking.

Exercise 3

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should have discovered some volunteer activities that could enhance your skills, expand your network and help others. Additionally, you should now be familiar with some of the temporary employment agencies in your area. You should also know what it feels like firsthand to conduct an informational interview and produce a report of your findings. The more interviews you conduct, the easier they become, and the more you learn about your intended profession. Plus, people in various companies become aware of you and will probably think of you when a job does open.

Exercise 4

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should now have a list of community resources that you feel are appropriate for your job hunt. More importantly, you should have a Top 10 list of people for networking, complete with full contact information. These are people you actually plan to call and meet.

You should also have a phone script ready to use when you call your contacts. Make sure the phone script includes:

- ➔ Personal introduction (and who referred you)
- ➔ Situation you are in
- ➔ Request for assistance
 - Can the contact help?
 - Does he know others you could talk to?
 - Does he know of other organizations that might be of interest to you?

- ➔ Request to use the contact's name to talk to referrals.
- ➔ Offer to assist the contact in some way.

Additionally, you should now have a brief elevator speech that you feel comfortable saying to strangers in one minute or less. Make sure the speech contains the following information:

- ➔ Name
- ➔ Skills and experience (school, volunteer or job)
- ➔ Interests
- ➔ Request for assistance

Exercise 5

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should now have a flexible script that you can use to get hold of a decision-maker. Make sure the script contains some of the following information:

- ➔ Personal introduction
- ➔ Statement of purpose: For example, "I submitted my resume for [position] on [date]."
- ➔ Quick follow-up questions: "What's the hiring process? When can I expect to hear more? Who else can I talk to so I can learn more about the position?"
- ➔ Thank you

In addition, you should now have an overall job strategy with all the various types of activities you want to use in your job hunt. You should have a job-hunt action plan in the form of a table, list or calendar. It should clearly identify the specific tasks you need to do, along with *when* you plan to do them: daily, weekly, monthly or ongoing. You need to keep your action plan current at all times.

Exercise 6

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. You should now have a letter of introduction that you can tweak and send to businesses in your area. You should also have a list of personal qualities that you're proud of and want to be known for. And, of course, you should now have a list of skills and accomplishments you can refer to at any time, should the moment arise. It's always nice to remind ourselves of what we've accomplished in the past because it helps us realize what we can accomplish in the future! Finally, you should have selected a particular resume format that suits you and populated the resume with much of this basic information:

- ➔ Contact information in the header
- ➔ Objective
- ➔ Qualifications summary
- ➔ Job history (if chronological resume)
- ➔ Skills categories (if functional or combination resume)
- ➔ Education

In addition, your resume might have some extra sections if they're applicable:

- ➔ Certifications
- ➔ Awards and recognition
- ➔ Professional development
- ➔ Leadership

Exercise 7

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should now have a list of your soft skills and examples of your "can-do" attitude. This information is very helpful when you polish your resume. Speaking of polishing it, your resume will now likely have:

- ➔ Qualifications summary statements written as short phrases or bulleted points (should include your hard and soft skills).
- ➔ Items under each job in the job history (chronological resume) or skills sections (functional resume) that start with action words. If possible, some of those items should be action-results statements.

The resume should not exceed two pages—either one page front and back or two pages single-sided. It should be clean and professional without any typographical or grammatical errors. The type font should be easy to read (at least 10 points in size) and darker than the background color. Refer to the guidelines in the resume checklist section to make sure you can answer *yes* to every question on the checklist.

Exercise 8

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should have a well-written cover letter that includes the four paragraphs that we discussed. You can use the cover letter you created as a template when you begin to respond to job openings. You should also have a thank-you letter that you can customize and use for a variety of situations. Also, make sure you have a clear idea of *who* would make a good reference for you and *what* your references might say about you. In fact, we hope you had fun writing your own letter of recommendation. Sometimes, references will ask you for some sort of template when they write their letters for you, and this is the perfect letter to give them.

Exercise 9

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should now have a list of businesses and organizations in your area that might employ medical transcriptionists, as well as a list of people you know who work in the medical field. Be prepared to ask your friends, family members and associates if they know of anyone who might need a medical transcriptionist, or if they know anyone who works for a company that might need your services. Finally, you should have a list of possible client sources. (An excellent place to advertise your business is in the magazine or newsletter that the medical society in your county publishes. This publication reaches most of the physicians in your county. You will probably have to call Directory Assistance or look on the Internet to get the telephone number of the medical society for your county. You can also place an ad in the Yellow Pages and/or the local newspaper.) You should also have a list of the names and phone numbers of companies that have a medical transcriptionist or office manager you could talk to.

Exercise 10

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. It's always a sobering experience to objectively evaluate your professional image and identify areas for improvement. However, it should be easier for you to see how to improve when you study someone with a great professional image. Make sure you are familiar with the dress code for the business at which you're applying so that you can dress a step above the daily attire. Continue to practice your handshake with friends and strangers, and make sure no one complains that your handshake is too soft or too rough.

Exercise 11

Because this exercise is subjective and answers will vary greatly, there are no right or wrong answers. However, you should now be more familiar with the types of questions (both experience-based and behavioral) that an interviewer might ask. You should have some well-thought-out answers for such questions. You should also be able to answer at least one difficult question (difficult from your perspective), and you should have practiced answering questions out loud. In addition, you should have a list of questions that *you* want to ask the interviewer—questions that will solicit answers that can help you decide if this is the company you want to work for. So, make sure the questions you ask deal with aspects of the company that you are concerned about.



Medical Transcription Course Outline

WHAT MAKES TRAINING WITH U.S. CAREER INSTITUTE SO SPECIAL?

- ◆ **Graduates ready to work:** With a solid academic base and extensive medical transcription practice, USCI graduates are ready to be productive immediately.
- ◆ **Authentic physician dictation:** Students complete a 120-hour practicum, transcribing physician dictation in all medical specialties. Extensive practice with foreign accents is included.
- ◆ **Independent study combined with close instructor monitoring:** Students become self-motivated and learn to work independently in USCI's self-paced course. Instructors monitor and evaluate student assignments and consult with students one on one.
- ◆ **Award-winning training materials designed by top professionals:** USCI's course was designed and reviewed by CMTs, physicians and educational experts. It has been approved by the Colorado State Department of Education. It won an Outstanding Achievement Award from the National Society for Performance Improvement.

MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

- How medical terms are formed
- Prefixes, suffixes, root words
- Over 3,500 word parts and medical terms taught
- Anatomy and physiology terms
- Medications, procedures, tests and equipment terms from each medical specialty

ENGLISH USAGE

- Punctuation and capitalization
- Acronyms and eponyms
- Numbers, symbols and abbreviations
- Medical plurals
- Grammar and editing

ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

- Body landmarks and divisions
- Body cavities
- Cells, tissues, organs
- Anatomy and physiology of all organ systems
- Disease processes

TRANSCRIPTION PRACTICUM

- Authentic physician dictation from these medical specialties:
 - General Medicine 100 hours
Dermatology, Neurology, Ophthalmology, Cardiology, Immunology, Psychiatry, Pulmonary Medicine, Gastroenterology, Urology, OB-GYN, Pediatrics, Endocrinology
 - General Surgery 20 hours
- Physicians with foreign accents
- Doctor's office and hospital transcription
- Research techniques
- Medical report formatting

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ethics
- Confidentiality
- Work habits
- Employment opportunities
- Career development

TECHNOLOGY

- Microsoft Word
- Dictation and transcription equipment
- Speech recognition technology
- E-mail etiquette
- Computer security
- Ergonomics
- Medical editing
- Electronic health record

