

# Be the Boss of Your Career: A Complete Guide for Students & Grads

# BE THE BOSS OF YOUR CAREER: A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS & GRADS

A Complete Guide for Students & Grads

LINDSAY BORTOT AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT CENTRE, ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

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# INTRODUCTION

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Dear Students and Graduates,

Algonquin College is committed to living out our mission statement by taking an active part in transforming your hopes and dreams into lifelong success. At the [Employment Support Centre](#), we recognize that the transition from education to employment is not always a clear or easy path, especially in a competitive and evolving job market. That is why we have created this comprehensive resource to assist you in managing a successful self-directed job search in order to secure meaningful employment and to build the skills you need to develop your career.

With an extensive amount of field experience, the Employment Support Centre team has compiled invaluable resources that will help you navigate your job search journey from start to finish. Whether you are preparing for a work-integrated learning opportunity, a part-time job, or a career, this book will guide you on how to:

- Plan for your career
- Research today's labour market
- Create robust self-marketing tools
- Build your personal brand
- Diversify your job search methods
- Utilize social media to create a professional digital footprint
- Master your interview skills to stand out from your competition
- Manage your career

Today, we would like to partner with you on this journey as you empower yourself through knowledge and take control of your life to achieve your ultimate career success.

*The Employment Support Centre Team*

# EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT CENTRE SERVICES

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The Employment Support Centre prioritizes student success. That is why, as a student or graduate of Algonquin College, you have access to personalized support from a team of experienced industry professionals. Appointments can be made directly through **The Welcome Centre by calling 613-727-4723 ext. 7200 or emailing [welcomecentre@algonquincollege.com](mailto:welcomecentre@algonquincollege.com)**.

When you meet with a team member, you will receive support for a range of different topics, including:

- Guidance in identifying your interests, values, strengths, and accomplishments.
- Gaining knowledge of labour market information, trends, and job prospects.
- Reviewing and targeting your resume, cover letter, and portfolio documents.
- Practising your interviewing skills and building your personal brand.
- Receiving job search coaching, identifying a variety of methods, and strategizing on an action plan.
- Getting feedback on your LinkedIn profile and advice on how to use it effectively.
- Obtaining information on career fairs and employer events.
- Accessing online job opportunities through an exclusive, electronic job board, HireAC.
- Availability to ask questions regarding anything related to employment.

Here is our advice to you:

## **1. It is never too early to start preparing.**

As you progress through your program, consider making multiple appointments to educate and prepare yourself for your future. Being prepared will build your confidence and will help to maintain your motivation throughout the entire process of finding employment. In addition, being proactive and getting a head start will increase your chances of having a shorter and more successful job search.

## **2. It is never a bad idea to ask for help.**

The Employment Support Centre Team is a constant resource to you throughout this journey, along with your professors, coordinators, employers, placement supervisors, and classmates. Take advantage of the supports that are available to you and don't be afraid to

ask as many questions as you need in order to reach your goals. Think creatively about those you are connected to and use them to gain valuable insight into your future.

**Visit the [Employment Support Centre](#) website for more information and resources.**

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT READINESS

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As a student, graduate, and job seeker you are committed to finding valuable work and life experiences that will contribute to your overall employment and career success. When you engage in a process of self-discovery, knowledge-finding, and action-planning, you set the stage for ensuring your career goals come to life. The Career Professionals of Canada explain that this process of career development is not linear, but rather cyclical, and you may find that you circle back again and again as you identify, evaluate, and re-evaluate the employment and career paths that are right for you throughout different times in your life.

As you transition from school to work, or as you move from job to job, the goal is to be “employment ready.” Valerie G. Ward Consulting explains that the concept of employment readiness depends on your personal ability to find, obtain and retain employment with minimal support from outside sources. Achieving a state of overall employment readiness results from a combination of several factors. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you have the appropriate career-decision making abilities, qualifications, education, job search skills, and ongoing career-management skills to manage your work life?
2. Are you able to perform well, take responsibility for creating your own successes, access support from your social networks, and maintain a job?
3. Do you have an awareness of the personal, environmental, and general challenges that you might face?

You may not be able to answer each of these questions yet; however, this book is designed to equip you with that knowledge and help you to develop the skills that you will need to achieve employment readiness.

# CAREERPRENEURSHIP

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We can no longer rely on the evolving job-market, as fewer permanent jobs become our reality. That is why, in order to create our own successes and generate new opportunities, we need to take a practical approach to the direction of our futures by being “careerpreneurs.” This is an idea presented by the Career Professionals of Canada in which you independently manage your own career path. Instead of waiting for your future to magically fall into your lap, it becomes imperative that you take a more assertive approach to finding valuable experiences and engaging in growth opportunities. Graduates today will experience more job changes than past generations; by gaining a broader range of experience through different roles, you will diversify your skill sets while becoming more adaptable to new challenges. It’s time to be the boss of your career!

The Career Professionals of Canada suggest some ideas that will help you to make that happen:

- **Be prepared and well-researched.**  
Know your market and develop a strategic job search plan according to your goals, interests, market, and industry.
- **Be a persuasive communicator.**  
Be able to explain the skills and competencies that make you stand out from your competition.
- **Be up to date with industry requirements and cultural trends.**  
Lifelong learning and continual skills development will leave your options open as you progress through your career.
- **Be strategic about developing your network and seek out mentorship opportunities.**  
Don’t just get connected, maintain your connections and don’t be afraid to ask for information or advice.
- **Be flexible when faced with roadblocks.**  
Don’t attribute blame to yourself if you experience rejection, let this fuel your motivation to succeed.
- **Be creative.**  
Think outside the box and propose solutions while incorporating others’ feedback.
- **Be responsible.**  
Consider other sources of income in order to sustain yourself in an unstable job market.
- **Be smart.**

Take advantage of the resources that are available to you in your career centre and community.

# CHAPTER 1: DISCOVER YOUR CAREER SELF

In this chapter, YOU will:

- Recognize and assess your interests, values, and skills.
- Brainstorm and identify your past accomplishments and areas of strength.
- Learn about the benefits of labour market research and how to conduct it when exploring your options.
- Define some of your career targets, set goals, and start to develop a plan to pursue them.

# ASSESS

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Are you a student just starting out in a program and wondering if this is the right fit for you? Are you completing a placement and trying to identify what areas of the field you are most interested in? Are you a job seeker who is struggling to understand why you don't enjoy the career you've been doing for years? Have you been laid off and now you're using this opportunity as a second chance to pursue something new?

Wherever you are in your employment and career journey, the path always starts with YOU. The first step to reaching your ultimate success and job satisfaction begins with a process of self-discovery. By taking the time to explore your own interests, values, skills, work preferences, and accomplishments, you will not only become more self-aware and self-assured in your career decision making, but you will also be able to articulate your strengths to employers in the future. This is often easier said than done, as it is not something we're commonly asked to think about. Consider the definitions of the following concepts and reflect on the corresponding questions and strategies. It may be a good idea to write down some of your thoughts.

Scroll down to read the concepts below or click on one of the following titles to read a specific concept:

- [Interests](#)
- [Values](#)
- [Skills](#)
- [Accomplishments](#)

## Interests

Throughout your varied life experiences, you have the opportunity to identify and explore your likes and dislikes. You learn about yourself by evaluating patterns of what captures your attention and awakens your curiosities – these become your interests. Ask yourself:

- What do you enjoy doing?



- What courses or school subjects have interested you the most?
- What motivates you to get out of bed in the morning?
- What jobs have you enjoyed the most and why?

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## Values

From an early age, you develop ideas from your family, culture, education, religion, and society as to what you believe is right and wrong and it is these beliefs that often dictate your behaviours. While many of these ideas will change over time, many of them stay with you, and will become your personal reference as you go through life; these are your values. Our work values are directly correlated to our job satisfaction. Consider the following work values:

- **Achievement**
  - Do you enjoy using your strongest abilities to accomplish your tasks?
  - Do you like being challenged and doing interesting work?
  - Do you like learning and gaining new skills?
- **Independence**
  - Do you enjoy working on your own and making decisions?
  - Do you enjoy finding new ways to do things and being creative?
- **Recognition**
  - Is it important for you to advance and have opportunities for leadership positions?
  - Do you desire to direct and influence those around you?
  - Is it important for you to have a prestigious job?
- **Relationships**
  - Do you need to provide service to others and work with co-workers in a friendly environment?
  - Do you want to work with diverse people of many cultures and backgrounds?
  - Do you feel a need to help and care for other people?

- **Support**

- Is it important for you to have the support of your boss to get your job done?
- Do you feel more effective when you have access to the right tools, training, and resources needed to do your job?

- **Working Conditions**

- Are job security and good working conditions a priority for you?
- What kind of work space do you prefer?
- How important is it for you to be paid well and have good benefits?
- Do you need variety in your daily work tasks?

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## Skills

Over the course of your life span, you will develop many different skills and abilities. Before diving headfirst into your job search, you will want to know what skills you have and how to describe them. This will allow you to know exactly what you have to offer and will help you communicate it to employers in interviews while networking, and through your resume, cover letter, and other job search tools. Some of these skills you will have learned from navigating everyday life situations and some will be learned more purposefully through education, training, work, and volunteer experiences. There are two main types of skills that you should be able to identify:

- 1. Technical or Industry Specific Skills (Hard Skills):** These skills are specific to your industry and the type of jobs to which you are applying. For example, administrative assistants require the knowledge of how to use Microsoft Office software to prepare and format business documents, such as correspondence, reports, statements, forms, presentations, applications, etc.
  - Identify the Industry Specific Skills you have learned in college by reviewing the Learning Outcomes section on your program's website, as well as your course descriptions.
  - Make a list of the tasks that were required in your previous jobs and list the skills that were associated with them.
- 2. Essential Employability or Transferrable Skills (Soft Skills):** These skills are more general and considered essential to succeed in any job or industry. You develop and utilize these

skills through a variety of experiences and everyday tasks. For example, these could include verbal and written communication, interpersonal, problem solving, and time management skills.

- Identify these skills by thinking of tasks and responsibilities you performed effectively in your jobs, volunteering, school projects, and extra-curricular activities, and then identify what skills you used to perform them.
- Review the resources listed below for descriptions and examples of essential skills sought by employers

- Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development – Essential Employability Skills
- The Conference Board of Canada

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## Accomplishments

Before writing your resume, cover letter, and preparing for interviews, it is helpful to spend some time identifying examples of your past achievements. Typically, these are characterized by occasions where you recognized a problem or a situation that could have been improved, you acted or responded to it, and it resulted in recognition or a positive outcome. Not only do accomplishments provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate your skills, but they also give you the chance to showcase your achievements, and you should be proud because you've worked hard for them!

Accomplishment statements are highly favoured by employers because they provide tangible evidence as to what you can bring to the workplace and substantiate the skills or competencies you present on your resume. Accomplishment statements also demonstrate why you would be the best candidate for the position and can be used by employers to help differentiate you when compared to other applicants who have may have had similar experiences. To have the most impact, accomplishment statements should:

- **Be relevant** to the employer and the position.

- **Make a connection** with the job requirements, and help an employer to visualize you making similar contributions to their organization.
- **Incorporate metrics**, such as quantifiable figures, numbers, statistics, percentages, or dollar amounts when relevant; for example: “Created a marketing campaign that increased product sales by 30% in three months.”
- **Use strong action verbs**; for example: “completed,” “raised,” “achieved,” “delivered,” etc.

Start by brainstorming the tasks and activities you performed well from your past or current experience. When thinking about each experience, ask yourself the following question: How was my performance measured in this position and what value did I bring to this workplace or organization?

It can be helpful to list your experiences to date (work, volunteer, education, academic projects, assignments, and presentations) and identify achievements for each of these. Think of significant contributions, individual or group projects, recognition received from a formal performance review, or informally from coworkers, team members, customers, professors, and supervisors. Accomplishments can also include awards or any contributions you made that had a positive impact on your workplace. Refer to Chapter 2 to see a more detailed explanation of how to write Accomplishment Statements.

## Other Assessment Methods

We recognize that it can be particularly difficult for you to identify some of your own personal strengths. That being said, there are a number of other methods of assessment you can use in order to assist you with this. For example:

- **Peer Assessments:** Ask those who are closest to you, such as your friends, family, classmates, and coworkers to point out what they think your strengths are.
- **Online Assessments:** Consider using integrated online tools such as Career Cruising or Type Focus to assess personality, interests, values, and skills to help you better understand yourself and identify matching careers. Contact your college or community employment agencies to acquire free access to complete these assessments.
- **Formal Assessments:** Contact the Counselling department to inquire about completing formal career assessments that may provide more concrete insights

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## **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

Contact Counselling Services for more information regarding formal assessments.  
[algonquincollege.com/counselling](https://algonquincollege.com/counselling)

# RESEARCH

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It might not be an easy task, but recognizing your interests, values, skills, and accomplishments and gaining a better understanding of what you want and need will lead to increased self-assurance in your career decision making. Now you can start researching the labour market for occupations that may be compatible. Begin by compiling a list of what types of jobs you would like to research; you likely have some ideas in mind already and your assessments may have also provided you with a list of potential occupations. Be prepared for this list to change as you learn more about different occupations and what options might be available to you.

**Labour Market Information (LMI)** is an essential tool that will allow you to research what is happening in an industry as a whole. You can learn about job descriptions, job duties, related occupations, job opportunities, trends, wages, outlooks, and educational requirements both locally, provincially, and nationally. This information will allow you to make a more responsible decision when making a career choice.

With the constantly evolving job market, some additional considerations should be considered when selecting a career direction to ensure that you are setting yourself up for success. For example:

- Is the industry being disrupted by technology, automation, or social media?
- Are jobs in the industry affected by outsourcing?
- How will these trends affect job prospects in that industry?

Websites can be a good source of Labour Market Information. However, it is important to use multiple sources to understand the whole picture. Some of the sites that offer well-researched LMI are:

- [Explore Careers – Job Bank](#)
- [Canada Job Bank – Job Market Trends and News](#)
- [National Occupational Classification](#)
- [Ontario’s Labour Market](#)
- [Labour Market Ottawa](#)
- Social media websites, including LinkedIn

- Algonquin College's Graduate Employment Reports

As a student or recent graduate, other ways of researching and collecting Labour Market Information could include:

- Speaking with individuals in positions or occupations that you are interested in by scheduling informational interviews.
- Arranging for a job shadowing or mentorship opportunity with a professional in the field.
- Participating in work-integrated learning or volunteer opportunities.
- Trying out a related course or looking for part-time employment in a related field.
- Meeting with a team member at the [Employment Support Centre](#).



### **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

Contact the Employment Support Centre if you're interested in discussing Labour Market Information.

[algonquincollege.com/employment](https://algonquincollege.com/employment)

# PLAN

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You're finally starting to put the puzzle pieces together, you can see a clearer path ahead of you, and your self-assessments and occupational research have confirmed which roads you are looking to travel down and explore further. Be prepared for life to get in the way, and to adapt to the changes that are destined to happen as you learn, transition, and grow throughout different times in your life. By taking into consideration what we have learned above, it's time to set short-and long-term career goals and identify a plan of action. Here is what you need to do:

- **Identify a few career targets.**

Write down potential career or employment goals that you are seeking. If you're just starting out in the planning phase, consider having several career options identified. If you are nearing the end of your program, narrow your career target down, as having too many options may cause you to feel overwhelmed or unfocused.

- **Compare and prioritize your options.**

Solidify and make a comparison of potential occupations based on what you're interested in and how realistic it is to obtain employment in the field. Prioritize your options based on your interests and by the required education and experience for the required position(s). If you do not meet the specified requirements, revise your current goal or identify what needs to be done to get there.

- **Set goals and create a plan.**

Figure out how you are going to act on achieving your career decisions by implementing strategic goals. Create a plan by identifying measurable tasks or criteria that you are going to complete. Focus on ensuring your goals are relevant and realistic and commit to completing them within a specified timeframe. Set long- and short-term goals at different intervals of your journey. For example, a Social Service Worker student might set a goal to secure a volunteer position with a youth-based, non-profit organization before the end of the first semester. To accomplish this, the student will reach out to three organizations of interest and search online three times a week for at least an hour.

- **Talk to people, constantly.**

As a best practice, you should always make it a point to have career conversations with the people around you. With every experience and opportunity you find yourself pursuing, there will be a direct link to valuable, real-life insight and advice. Information from these individuals will not only help you to better prepare for your career, but they will also help you manage your expectations, and provide you with support and access to opportunities you may not have otherwise known about.



# CHAPTER 2: REVITALIZE YOUR JOB SEARCH DOCUMENTS

In this chapter, YOU will:

- Identify professional, industry-specific language and keywords.
- Brainstorm and write strong work descriptions and accomplishment statements.
- Prepare and develop an effective and tailored resume and cover letter.
- Present and collect the appropriate reference information.
- Understand the benefits and uses of portfolios.

# RESUME

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Resumes are no longer a literal account of your work history; they are a strategic story of your most marketable skills and experiences. Think of your resume as a marketing tool and imagine yourself as the product that you are marketing. This is your opportunity to sell yourself and your skills in order to create a strong, memorable, and confident first impression. We know resumes are hard to write and, that's why we've compiled everything you need to know in order to help you write one.

Remember also that your resume is a living, breathing document and should be continually updated as you change, learn, and grow. Since it is often your very first introduction to a prospective employer, your document needs to impress the hiring manager enough for them to want to meet with you in person and invite you for an interview. When employers receive large quantities of resumes, they simply don't have the time and resources to retain all the information you are presenting. That is why it is essential to be as clear as possible; this will allow the employer or hiring committee to find the information they are looking for within the few seconds they take to read it over.

A well-planned resume will:

- Demonstrate your ability to organize and present ideas clearly.
- Show your attention to detail by being free of errors.
- Provide details of your relevant experience and education credentials.
- Offer discussion points during an interview.

# RESUME WRITING ESSENTIALS

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## Use tailored, industry-specific language.

For your resume to be effective in impressing prospective employers, it must be tailored to the requirements of each job. You must clearly demonstrate that you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the essential duties of the role. As part of your resume preparation, take the time to research and understand the typical job requirements in your occupation. In addition to researching the job requirements, these resources will also help you build detail and professional, industry-specific, language into your resume. It is important to be both detailed and concise in your resume in order to capture the reader's interest while giving them a clear explanation of your abilities. Consider the following resources to assist you:

- 1. Use Labour Market Information** resources such as the [Job Bank – Explore Careers](#) website to review various career and occupational profiles and understand the required duties and responsibilities. You could also use [National Occupation Classification Codes](#), a government website that provides Canadian occupational information and organizes occupational titles according to skill levels and skill types. This can be used as a guide to inform you of all the various tasks and duties that are associated with different jobs.
- 2. Refer to your program Learning Outcomes** – For each program at Algonquin College, learning outcomes are identified in order for you as a student to understand what abilities you will reliably be able to demonstrate upon graduation. The learning outcomes were developed by employers and industry professionals prior to the creation of your course and offer industry-specific language that you can apply to your resume.
- 3. Look up job postings** you are interested in applying for and examine the qualifications/ duties listed. Next, make a match between your skills, knowledge, and experience and the job requirements. Looking at job postings that reflect your job goal will provide you with a sense of the common requirements that an employer might be looking for and assist you in tailoring your resume to those jobs in the future.

## Use action verbs.

We know that employers and hiring managers are bombarded with applications; therefore, you are not doing yourself any favours by using all the same, old, tired words that everyone else is

using. Common terms have lost their meaning; by expanding your own action verb vocabulary you will help to showcase your duties and accomplishments in a more interesting and favourable light. As you write or update your resume, your challenge is to capture the attention of the employer through more compelling language. Starting each sentence with a strong action verb will strengthen your writing and provide a clearer, more interesting picture of what you have done.

Review your resume, go back and look at each word and ask yourself, is it powerful, appropriate, and exciting? Choose words both thoughtfully and economically. Avoid repetition. Use the following list to help you bring your resume to the next level.

## COMMUNICATION

Arranged  
Authored  
Collaborated  
Communicated  
Consulted  
Corresponded  
Debated  
Defined  
Discussed  
Drafted  
Edited  
Explained  
Interacted  
Interpreted  
Interviewed  
Joined  
Listened  
Marketed  
Mediated  
Moderated  
Negotiated  
Observed  
Participated  
Persuaded  
Presented  
Publicized  
Reported  
Responded  
Translated

Wrote

## MANAGEMENT

Administered

Analyzed

Appointed

Approved

Assigned

Attained

Authorized

Chaired

Coordinated

Designed

Delegated

Directed

Established

Executed

Led

Managed

Motivated

Organized

Oversaw

Planned

Prioritized

Reviewed

Scheduled

Supervised

## TEACHING/HELPING

Advised

Aided

Answered

Assisted

Clarified

Coached

Contributed

Demonstrated

Educated

Encouraged  
Evaluated  
Explained  
Facilitated  
Guided  
Helped  
Individualized  
Informed  
Instilled  
Instructed  
Motivated  
Persuaded  
Resolved  
Simplified  
Supported  
Taught  
Trained  
Tutored  
Volunteered

## FINANCIAL

Administered  
Adjusted  
Allocated  
Appraised  
Audited  
Balanced  
Budgeted  
Calculated  
Estimated  
Forecasted  
Netted  
Projected  
Purchased  
Qualified  
Reconciled  
Reduced

## CLERICAL

Arranged  
Catalogued  
Classified  
Collected  
Compiled  
Filed  
Organized  
Prepared  
Processed  
Recorded  
Scheduled

## RESEARCH

Analyzed  
Collected  
Compiled  
Filed  
Organized  
Prepared  
Processed  
Recorded  
Scheduled

## CREATIVE

Arranged  
Acted  
Composed  
Created  
Customized  
Designed  
Developed  
Directed  
Established  
Fashioned  
Founded  
Illustrated  
Invented

Modelled  
Originated  
Performed  
Shaped  
Solved

## TECHNICAL

Adapted  
Applied  
Assembled  
Built  
Computed  
Debugged  
Designed  
Developed  
Engineered  
Installed  
Maintained  
Operated  
Programmed  
Remodeled  
Solved  
Standardized  
Tested  
Upgraded

### Write strong summaries of each position.

When developing your resume, you can really set yourself apart from others by writing strong summaries of your positions. You may feel that your experience is limited or unrelated and that it's not worth describing your tasks in detail; however, oftentimes we are actually gaining and using skills without even realizing it. Many people make the mistake of having position descriptions that are too short and that lack value; let's look at what you can do to value-pack your work experiences. Focus on including the following components in your descriptions:

1. **Task:** Identify the day-to-day activities you were expected to complete.
2. **Skill:** Decide which transferable skills you used to perform the tasks.



### 3. Outcome: State the outcome of the task.

Even in your part-time and interim jobs, you've gained many applicable transferable skills, take a look:

- Interacted with customers (Task) by listening carefully (Skill) to answer questions about store products (Outcome).
- Sold store merchandise (Task) by upselling product benefits (Skill) to meet daily sales goals (Outcome).
- Handled cash (Task) accurately in a busy environment (Skill) to ensure store till was balanced before closing (Outcome).

## Write accomplishment statements.

Let's take this one step farther by highlighting your accomplishments. In Chapter 1, you learned the value of identifying your personal, academic, and professional accomplishments. When it comes to writing your resume, it's extremely important for you to be able to describe these accomplishments in order to set you apart from your competition. If you haven't had a chance to brainstorm situations from your previous or current experience where you've performed exceptionally well, consider the following questions to get you thinking:

- Have you received praise from managers, supervisors, instructors, or clients?
- Have you ever been assigned a task that you could do better than others?
- Have you ever been asked to train anyone?  
How did you distinguish yourself or set yourself apart in your last job? What did you do to show your initiative?
- When did you go above and beyond your job duties to complete a task and/or satisfy a customer?
- Have you ever been promoted, recognized, awarded, or thanked by your coworkers?
- How did your work affect the strategic business operations?

Your next step is to develop your accomplishment statements by preparing your examples using the STAR technique to outline the task, action, and result for each of your examples.

### **(S) Situation + (T) Task + (A) Action + (R) Result**

Start by describing the **Situation or Task** followed by the Action you have taken and the Result you have achieved. Use strong action verbs to make the most impact. Don't forget to quantify the results or actions as much as possible. Be specific, but concise. You can additionally vary the focus of your statement by choosing what actions you highlight.

Take a look at the following example:

**Situation/Task:** Orient new employees to the job.

**Action:** Prepared department's first operations manual; researched and analyzed best practices, and surveyed staff on what they thought should be included.

**Result:** Orientation went faster, department used fewer staff resources, new staff member remembered more, and both new employees and manager had a record of what was covered for future reference; obtained good feedback from new employees, coworkers, and manager.

**Accomplishment Statement (starting with an action):**

Created department's first operations manual that increased the effectiveness of the new employee training and significantly reduced the expenditure of time and resources.

**Accomplishment Statement (starting with a Result):**

Increased effectiveness of the new employee training while reducing the expenditure of time and resources by creating department's first operations manual.

Accomplishment Statements demonstrate value, provide the "so what" factor, and add credibility and strength to your resume. Including Accomplishment Statements in your resume and cover letter is an effective job search strategy that will make you stand out from other candidates and impress potential employers. Here are a few more examples:

- Prepared over 10 accurate, well researched, concisely written, and properly cited reports, 10 + pages long on average, in a two-month period.
- Led a team of five to deliver a final research project one week ahead of the deadline through careful coordination of tasks and effective resource and time allocation.
- Consistently achieved daily sales targets by demonstrating interest in customer needs and actively interacting with them in a friendly, non-invasive manner throughout their visit.

# RESUME TYPES

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First and foremost, there is no single “right” way to do your resume. Every resume should be strategically designed to represent your individual circumstances and best highlight your “fit” for the position at hand. Some resume styles are more appropriate for specific occupations or fields than others and some industries may be more accepting of a shorter or longer resume depending on their needs, time, and resources. If you are unsure which format to use, read the explanations below and consider going straight to the source by having people in the field you are targeting, or the companies you are interested in working for, offer you feedback and input.

- **Chronological:** This format focuses on work experience and education and places less emphasis on the skills section of the resume. Experience is featured on the first page of the resume, listing it in reverse chronological order (most recent first). This format is best used by job seekers who have significant work experience and education related to the job. It lets the reader see career stability, career progression, and includes details about each job held.
- **Functional:** This format is sometimes recommended to those with minimal experience, career-changers who are transitioning from one area of expertise to another and individuals with gaps in their work history. This format focuses more on skills and less on experience. Keep in mind that this format may make it difficult for employers to see where your experience has been gained.
- **Combination:** This format combines the skills and experience section from a functional format with the details of a work experience section found in a chronological format. The combination format allows students and new graduates to highlight skills gained through their education as well as emphasize their practical experience obtained from field placements, co-op, applied research and team projects.

# RESUME SECTIONS

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## Contact Information

- This section typically includes your name, home address, and contact information (phone, email) and links to your LinkedIn profile, online portfolios, or websites (if applicable).
- Including an address is optional, however it is suggested to include your address when you're applying for local positions and it is suggested to remove your address if you are looking for jobs in different cities or countries.
- Your phone number should lead to a voicemail message and your voicemail message should indicate to an employer what number they have reached.
- Your email address should reflect your professional image, which is usually some combination of your first and last name or initials, avoid using a humorous or inappropriate email address.

## Profile

- This section is a brief 2-3 sentence summary of your qualifications and experience as they relate to your overall job goal or job posting for which you are applying to.
- The profile can be written in point form or a short paragraph or it can be a combination of both. Highlighting the number of years' experience or the program you are studying will give you a robust introduction.
- This section can also emphasize personal skills requested in the job posting (e.g. adaptable, innovative, quick learner, positive etc.).
- Many of you may be more familiar with the Objective Statement. Although this may have been appropriate when seeking interim employment, employers seem to prefer the Profile to the Objective at a career-level search as it focuses more on what a candidate can contribute, rather than just stating what they want.

## Summary of Qualifications

This section:

- Highlights related professional skills and experiences that you have gained through studies, work, and volunteer activities.
- Includes relevant soft skills, for example, interpersonal, communication, organizational, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork skills and how or where you demonstrated them.
- Includes required or asset certifications, for example, First Aid, WHMIS, Health and Safety, etc.
- Uses information from learning outcomes and course outlines to reflect professional skills gained during studies.
- Positions and prioritizes points to match the posting (order of importance from employer's viewpoint).
- Uses keywords from the job posting and the occupation specific language/terminology.
- Lists computer skills and other technical skills relevant to your field.
- Does not include skills/knowledge that cannot be supported by examples.

## Education

- In this section, include a list of your education, including Diplomas/Degrees/Certificates, the year in which you obtained them, or the dates in which you are currently completing them, the school you attended, and the locations.
- You can include information on post-secondary courses as well, even if you haven't completed them, simply identify the start and end dates.
- Furthermore, you can continue to include your secondary school information if you have not previously completed post-secondary.
- Information on relevant courses or notable GPAs can be included as a bullet point underneath. Ensure that you indicate what your GPA is out of, for example, 3.5/4.0, as different schools have varying scales.
- Lastly, if you are in a career transition and your education is not related to your current goal or your education over qualifies you, you can consider calling this section "Related Education" and provide only the education that is pertinent to the job requirements.

## Work Experience

- In this section, list your work experience in reverse chronological order (most recent information first), stating the job title, company name, and dates clearly and visibly.

- Under each entry, your job descriptions should be written effectively with the use of action verbs, emphasis on accomplishments, and with the right amount of detail, about 4-7 bullets per each job.

## Additional Experience Section Considerations

- If you have relevant academic and applied projects, work or clinical placements, co-op, part-time, and summer and volunteer jobs, you can consider separating your work experience into “Related Experience” and “Other Experience.” The “Related Experience” would be presented first and would make a stronger connection to your current job goal. If you don’t necessarily have experience that relates, you can simply place all of your experience under “Work Experience.”

## Other Possible Resume Sections Include:

- Volunteer Experience
- Certifications
- Professional Development or Training
- Awards
- Memberships
- Activities

### What Not to Include on a Resume:

- Personal information, such as age, date of birth, marital status, ethnicity, religion
- Photographs or graphics, with the exception of art, media or design related occupations
- Information that is out-of-date (typically more than 10 years old) or that is not relevant to the position
- Certifications that are expired or not relevant to the job that you are applying to
- Names and contact information of your references

# RESUME TIPS

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- **Customize your resume to match the job requirements.**

Clearly indicate and provide details of relevant experience, qualifications, and education credentials. The employer needs to be able to find the essential information in a short period of time, as often in the first step of the selection process resumes are read or scanned in only 30-60 seconds. Use keywords from the job posting and the occupation specific language/terminology.

- **Create a strong first impression.**

Keep the format simple and professional. Use 11- or 12-point font size and web-friendly fonts. Avoid using graphics, multiple styles of bullets and fonts, tables, and columns. Use sub headings and a space between sections to ensure that your resume is clear and easy to read. Ensure that your formatting is consistent throughout. For example, bullets and dates should be aligned in all sections, and dates should be presented consistently as full month or abbreviated month. Showcase your skills on a two-page resume: this is the expectation once you are a post-secondary student, graduate, or experienced worker, but can vary depending on individual circumstance and industry preferences.

- **Keep it error free!**

Demonstrate your attention to detail by being free of grammar and spelling errors. Proofread your resume; do not rely solely on spellcheck. Have a second person proofread your resume; a second set of eyes may see what you have missed. Bring your resume or cover letter to a drop-in session at the Employment Support Centre.

- **Emphasize your education.**

Review program and course learning outcomes; describe practical projects, labs, assignments, work placements, and co-op experiences that you have completed during your studies. Include your GPA if it is notable: e.g. above 3.0 / 4.0.

- **Include transferrable or “soft skills.”**

Describe your interpersonal, communication, organizational, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork skills and/or other soft skills that you gained from part-time jobs, volunteer, or extra-curricular activities. Make an effort to identify the soft skills that are mentioned in the job posting you are applying to.

- **Be action-oriented and highlight accomplishments.**

Add value, provide tangible evidence, and increase credibility by including numbers, statistics, percentages, or figures and by using strong accomplishment statements and action verbs when describing your experiences. Accomplishments can include awards and formal

recognitions, but also any contributions you made that had a positive impact on your workplace.

- **Focus on compatibility.**

Submit your application in the file format that is suggested on the posting, however, if not otherwise specified, submit in Microsoft Word. Avoid using unique fonts and bullets that may not be compatible across different word processing software. Be cautious when using resume templates, tables, or columns, as Applicant Tracking Systems may not be able to read them properly.

- **Add relevant links.**

Be sure to include website addresses to your online portfolio, a completed professional LinkedIn profile, or other relevant links that demonstrate your work, if applicable.



### **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

Visit the Employment Support Centre for a resume review.  
[algonquincollege.com/employment](https://algonquincollege.com/employment)



# RESUME SAMPLES

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The list below has resume samples for various areas of study. Click on the resumes to view them.

- [Building Construction Technician](#)
- [Business Administration](#)
- [Child and Youth Care](#)
- [Computer Programmer](#)
- [Culinary Management](#)
- [Developmental Service Worker](#)
- [Event Planning](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Mechanical Engineering](#)
- [Nursing](#)
- [Office Administration Executive](#)
- [OTA, PTA](#)

# RESUME CHECKLIST

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FORMAT	DONE	TO DO
<p><b>RESUME CONTACT INFORMATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resume contact information includes a professional email address and a phone number with a proper voicemail greeting.</li> <li>• Resume contact information is visible on each page.</li> <li>• If applicable, resume includes a link to a LinkedIn profile or an online portfolio.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>RESUME APPEARANCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font size and type are appropriate, not too small or large, and easy to read.</li> <li>• Graphic elements look visually appealing in print and on the screen.</li> <li>• Consistent use of formatting, including page margins, line spacing, headings, bold, underline, and italics.</li> </ul>		
CONTENT	DONE	TO DO
<p><b>PROFILE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profile section is of suitable length, about 3-4 sentences, and is tailored to the job posting requirements.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of Qualifications section includes relevant Industry Specific and Transferable skills gained from education and experience.</li> <li>• Industry Specific skills are described with the use of industry language found in the job posting and course outlines/learning outcomes of the current program of study.</li> </ul>		

<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education section starts with the current program of study or most recent educational credential, and followed by other related education.</li> <li>• Education entries are listed in the reverse chronological order.</li> <li>• GPA details are included if represent a strong achievement (e.g. 3.0/4.0).</li> </ul>		
<p><b>WORK EXPERIENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If applicable, resume includes a “Related Experience” section that presents relevant academic and applied projects, work or clinical placements, co-op, part-time, and volunteer jobs.</li> <li>• Current or most recent experience is presented first and other entries are listed in a reverse chronological order.</li> <li>• Job titles/roles and company names are clearly visible for each entry.</li> <li>• Job descriptions are written effectively with the use of action verbs, emphasis on accomplishments, and with the right amount of detail, about 4-7 bullets per each job.</li> <li>• International work experience is presented if relevant for the job, or if the candidate lacks or has very little Canadian work experience.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>ADDITIONAL RESUME SECTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer Experience section – includes a short description of duties and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Certifications section – lists relevant certifications with dates.</li> <li>• Professional Development section – includes special courses, conferences/seminars.</li> <li>• Other optional sections include: Awards, Memberships, Extra-Curricular Activities.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>STRUCTURE</b></p>	<p><b>DONE</b></p>	<p><b>TO DO</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resume is free of spelling and grammar errors; verb tenses and capitals are used correctly.</li> <li>• Personal pronouns (I, me, my) are not included in the resume.</li> <li>• Resume length is appropriate (1-2 pages), content is tailored to the job, and relevant skills and experiences are easy to find.</li> </ul>		

[Download Resume Checklist](#)

# COVER LETTER

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Think of the cover letter like beautifully crafted icing on top of a delicious and important cake. The cake is an essential component, but neither the cake nor the icing are nearly as good when they are eaten on their own. In comparison, your cover letter should always accompany your resume, and emphasize, expand, and complement several key points related to the employer's needs. Just like a good cake, it has to be professional, well-crafted, interesting, and impressive! It should encourage the employer to want to read through your resume and persuade them to meet with you to further explore your qualifications.

It's common to question why a cover letter is needed and whether or not recruiters or employers even read it. There are definitely some companies that are too busy to read cover letters, but there are many managers at small and medium sized companies that do take the time to skim through them. Truthfully, we cannot know for sure what each and every employer or recruiter reads or relies on when deciding on whom to interview. However, if your resume has been shortlisted, your cover letter could set you apart from other candidates. By submitting both a tailored resume and cover letter, you will increase your chances of being screened in. Preparing a well thought-out, personalized, customized, and compelling cover letter is an effective job search strategy that can give you an advantage over other applicants.

# COVER LETTER TYPES

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There are two types of cover letters that you can prepare:

- **Targeted:** A targeted cover letter is written in response to a specific job posting and is the most commonly used type of letter. You customize the content of your letter to match the job requirements listed in the advertisement. Your cover letter should provide concrete examples from your experience of how you have demonstrated the qualifications listed. This type of letter is typically used when submitting applications online or emailing your documents directly in response to a position.
- **Generalized:** A generalized cover letter can be used when you are applying to a company, but you are unaware of the positions that they are hiring for. This type of letter might be used when attending a career event where multiple employers are present but the available jobs are unknown. You can also prepare a generalized cover letter for when you find yourself in an unplanned networking situation; your letter will provide your contact with information highlighting your professional accomplishments.

# COVER LETTER SECTIONS

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- **Your Contact Information:** Similar to your resume, your cover letter should start by indicating your first and last name, current address, phone number, and email address. It is appropriate for this section to match the format of your resume to show consistency in your branding.
- **Date of Submission:** Indicate the date that you are applying and submitting your application for the position. Write out the date in long form, for example, March 31, 2021.
- **Company Name, Department Name, and Address:** In this section, include the name of the company and/or department that is listed on the job posting, as well as the company's full address. If the address is not listed on the posting and there happens to be several different locations, you could reach out to the company directly to find out more information on which location is hiring. If you are still unable to obtain this information, use the Head Office address.
- **Greeting:** Often times the name of the hiring contact and address will be included on the posting, however if it is not, put in the extra effort to research this information for yourself. Consider looking at the website, LinkedIn, or calling the company directly to obtain the name of the person in charge of hiring for the position. If you are able to obtain this information, personalize your greeting to say, "Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name." If by their name, their gender is unknown, you would say, "Dear Mr. or Ms. First and Last Name." If you are unable to obtain a specific name, "Dear Hiring Manager" is appropriate. As a best practice, the more personalization, the better, therefore, do not use a generic greeting such as "To Whom it May Concern"
- **Introduction:** In the first paragraph, start with an interesting hook, introduce yourself, state what position and company you are applying to, why you are applying, and where you saw it advertised or how you heard about the position.
- **Body of the Letter:** In the body of the letter, your goal is to sell yourself by providing a summary of your relevant education, experience, and personal characteristics that match the requirements of the job posting and demonstrate how you will meet the employer's needs.
- **Organization:** In this paragraph, you should be convincing the employer that they are the only company that you want to work for. Show the employer that you are a strong fit for the organization's culture by highlighting what interests you about the mission, vision, values, and/or projects and services. By stating your knowledge of the company and emphasizing your interest, you are setting yourself apart from other candidates who have not strategically



communicated this.

- **Conclusion:** In closing your cover letter, briefly summarize what you will contribute to the company. Additionally, thank the employer for their consideration, provide your contact information and remind them how you can be reached most easily, you can also clarify which times of the day you are most reachable if you have other obligations. Lastly, welcome an opportunity to meet or discuss your qualifications further.
- **Signature:** Complete your letter by writing “Sincerely” underneath your last paragraph. Skip several spaces and type out your first and last name. There are several applications that can be downloaded on your smart devices that allow you to create an importable image of your handwritten signature, which offers a nice professional look to finish off your letter when submitting your applications online.

# COVER LETTER TIPS

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- **Customize it.**

The employers want to see you demonstrate your knowledge of the company, show how you could benefit their team, and provide compelling reasons why you would like to work for them. Emphasize and expand on several key points related to the employer's needs and highlight asset points, such as the ability to work flex hours, willingness to relocate, etc.

- **Do your research.**

Read through the "About Us" page on the company's website, their mission statement, and social media sites to get more information and insight into the company before you start writing. Your goal is to make the company believe that they are the one and only place you want to work. This is also good preparation for the common questions that will often be asked, such as: "What do you know about our company/organization and why do you want to work for us?"

- **Personalize it.**

Whenever possible, personalize your greeting and address your cover letter to the appropriate individual(s). For some Hiring Managers this small detail can make the difference between screening you in or out. Also, if you heard about the position from someone you know, or someone you met at an employer event or career fair, make sure to mention their name(s) in your introduction.

- **Be creative.**

Avoid using the same cookie-cutter introductory lines like everyone else. Show your uniqueness and come up with a creative hook line to capture your reader's attention. Consider stating an accomplishment, highlighting your passion, mentioning your love for the company, or something interesting you heard about the company in the news. For example, avoid the standard, "I would like to apply for the position of...", but try something more like, "Are you looking for someone who finds inefficiencies, identifies ways to streamline them, and consistently strives to boost the productivity of the team? Well, being that person has earned me two promotions in the last year at my current company, and it's what I know I can do for you."

- **Be consistent with your format and presentation.**

Write your cover letter in a business letter format, you will see this reflected in the template provided in the following section. Use the same font type and size as your resume. Stick to plain paper and avoid graphics.

- **Follow instructions.**

Pay attention to the application instructions, many job postings require you to quote a job number in your cover letter to be considered altogether. The posting may also indicate what preferred file format to submit your document in as well. Furthermore, there are some trend-setting companies that are challenging the more conventional cover letter formats. Should you be applying to these companies, make sure to closely read the instructions that are provided on the job posting and write your cover letter accordingly.

- **Don't duplicate your resume.**

Avoid presenting information not covered in the resume, but at the same time do not restate your resume word for word. Rather, summarize your most relevant skills and experiences as they relate to the employer's needs.

- **Be concise.**

A three to four-paragraph, one-page cover letter is perfectly acceptable. Remembering the volume of applications employers receive, ensuring that your cover letter is concise and to the point will increase its likelihood of being read. You can use point form when describing your qualifications, but do not turn the whole cover letter into point form format as you risk not including enough of an explanation.

- **Be aware of organization and flow.**

A disorganized and poorly written cover letter can be tiresome for an employer to read. Ensure that the content of your letter flows well and that you aren't bouncing back between ideas. Secondly, limit the amount of "I" sentences and run-on sentences; focus on using transition words like, "additionally and furthermore" to make your writing flow more easily.

- **Proofread.**

Have a second set of eyes read through your cover letter for mistakes. One grammatical error may mean that your application will not be considered. Furthermore, pay close attention to your details. If you tend to build off of previously saved cover letters, ensure that you have changed all the pertinent information before sending. Submitting a cover letter with the wrong date or employer name on the application may cause an employer to have a negative first impression.

# COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

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Your Name

Your Address

Your Contact Information

Date of Submission

Employer's Name

Employer's Title

Company Name/Department Name

Company Address

**Re: Job Title, Job Reference # (if applicable)**

Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name, or Dear Hiring Manager, (when there is no contact person)

**INTRODUCTION:** The introduction should answer the 4 "W's" Who, Why, What, and Where. Who: Introduce yourself to the employer (your program of study) and start with a strong sentence that demonstrates why they should be interested in you.

**Why:** Indicate why you are writing and the reason you are interested in the company.

**What:** List the job title or describe what type of job interests you.

**Where:** Note whether you are responding to an advertised position, wish to be considered for a prospective opening, or if you were referred to the company by a friend or a colleague.

**BODY OF LETTER:** Promote yourself; give a summary of your relevant experience and how they meet the employer's needs: e.g. work placements, co-op, applied research, previous employment, years of experience, etc. Use descriptive, positive, action verbs to describe what you can do and keywords from the job posting. Highlight your strongest skills and provide further or more in-depth details about a significant accomplishment or an example that pertains to the job.

**ORGANIZATION:** Explain briefly why you would like to work for this employer. This paragraph lets the employer know that you have written this letter specifically for them. Demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

**CLOSING:** Summarize what you can do for the company. Thank the employer for their attention or consideration given. Ask for action, such as a meeting to further discuss your qualifications. Include your phone number and email address.

Sincerely, (Leave 4 – 6 spaces)

**YOUR SIGNATURE**

(if giving in person, include signature, if submitting online, insert image of signature)

Your first and last name (typewritten)

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[Download Cover Letter Template](#)

# COVER LETTER SAMPLE | CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Travis Booth  
1385 Woodroffe Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8  
613-727-4723 | bootht@algonquincollege.com

June 28, 2021

Paolo Monroe  
David's Tea  
339 Richmond Road, Unit #1  
Ottawa, ON K2A 0E7

**Re: Tea Guide Position, Job ID #1234**

Dear Mr. Monroe,

Are you looking to add a motivated and experienced customer service professional with superior communication skills to your team? I believe that my proven enthusiastic attitude, team-oriented approach, and the ability to engage customers will make me an effective Tea Guide at David's Tea. Your company is known for friendly and above-and-beyond customer service, quality, and variety of products. Delivering a high standard of service is important to me and I look forward to working for an organization where passion for customer experience is valued and rewarded.

With over five years of varied retail experience, I demonstrated my dedication to exceeding customer expectations by providing friendly, fast, and efficient service, helping customers find and discover the products that best match their needs and interests. One of the key strengths that I rely on is strong product knowledge. In every new position, I first make sure to gain accurate and detailed information about the products I am selling and continue keeping my knowledge up to date. When working at Millennium One Solutions as a Call Centre Representative, I demonstrated my enthusiasm and the ability to learn company service details in a short period. I was also regarded by my team as a resource person for questions about company services and pricing. With that strong product knowledge, I was successful at upselling additional features by educating customers as to the benefits they will receive.

Other personal qualities that I possess include being a flexible team player who can organize their time effectively to meet assigned goals. In my present position at Loblaws, I hold a record of consistently maintaining the largest section of the store to the store's quality standards, while also properly and attentively directing customer questions. I am also currently studying Business

Administration at Algonquin College, where I have gained sound understanding of project planning, professional communication, and marketing basics. These skills will be an asset to your team, where I can contribute to the collection and analysis of data to improve customer engagement, communicate with vendors or larger business clients, and deliver suitable customer solutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss how I can make a positive contribution to your team. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
(add signature)

Travis Booth

# REFERENCES

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At the end of a job interview, if your interviewer(s) are interested in moving to the next step, they will typically request that you provide them with a list of references. This is a list of people who have supervised you, worked closely with you, or know you personally and can speak about you in a professional or personal capacity, or both. References allow employers to verify that the information on your resume is true and it gives them the opportunity to ask questions to determine whether or not you will be a good employee.



# TYPES OF REFERENCES

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Consider the following types of references, remembering that the more professional references you provide the better.

- **Professional or employment references include past supervisors or managers, co-op employers, and field placement, practicum, or internship supervisors.**  
They can speak about your specific employment experience. You can also list people whom you have performed paid or voluntary activities for which could include babysitting, lawn mowing, or other odd jobs.
- **Character or personal references include teachers, professors, coworkers, neighbours, community members, or friends.**  
They can attest to your character and your abilities outside of work. This type of reference is sometimes more commonly used by current students, recent graduates, or those with limited working experience. Do not provide relatives or family members as your references.

# REFERENCES TIPS

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- **Choose your references strategically.**

Think of those that would speak positively about your experience, knowledge, interaction, personality, and work habits. Be confident that your references will recommend you to others without any reservations. If you have any hesitation that someone wouldn't speak well of you, move on to your next option.

- **Contact your references ahead of time.**

Remember to ask permission before listing an individual as a reference and confirm their most updated contact information. Provide your references with a copy of your resume and let them know what kinds of jobs you are applying to. By keeping your references in the know about your goals and activities, it will help them to provide a more appropriate recommendation.

- **Don't list your references on your resume.**

By including your references on a separate page you avoid giving out their personal information every time you apply to a job.

- **Provide your references only when asked.**

Most employers don't want to contact you until you've interviewed for the job. Therefore, your list should only be offered to the employer when requested, unless otherwise specified at the time of application.

- **Thank your references.**

Whether you are successful or not in getting the job, always take the time to thank your references. This will help you to maintain a positive relationship with your references and will allow you to continue using them as your reference in the future.

# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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## How many references do I need?

Three references is usually the preferred and expected amount; however, this may vary from company to company. The more professional the reference, the better. If you have more than three, feel free to include them, this will reflect positively on you. List your references in the order in which you want them to be contacted.

## What should I do if I don't have any references?

Get some! Some of you may find yourselves in a situation where you haven't had a lot of experience and therefore have limited references. To gain references, engage in volunteering opportunities, get a part-time job, consider participating in fundraising activities at your place of worship or in the community. If a job interview opportunity comes up before this, be honest, let them know you haven't had much professional experience and offer up some long-time personal contacts.

## Do I need to include "References Available Upon Request" on my resume?

The answer to this question often receives mixed reviews. You can state this simply at the closure of your resume, or you may choose not to include it, as it is often implied and not particularly informative to the employer.

## Can I use reference letters?

Yes, however, most employers prefer references that they can contact by phone or email. If your reference has moved or retired, and employers cannot contact them directly, you can provide written letters you have received in addition to your reference list. Reference letters are also a valuable addition to include in your professional portfolio, when applicable.



Be confident that your references will recommend you to others without

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“ any reservations.

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# REFERENCES TEMPLATE

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Name  
Home Address  
Contact Information (Phone, Email)

## REFERENCES

### **First and Last Name**

Title of Current Position  
Name of Current Company  
Relationship to You  
Phone Number  
Email Address

### **First and Last Name**

Title of Current Position  
Name of Current Company  
Relationship to You  
Phone Number  
Email Address

### **First and Last Name**

Title of Current Position  
Name of Current Company  
Relationship to You  
Phone Number  
Email Address

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References Template

# PORTFOLIOS

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Your career is made up of many different kinds of tangible by-products; many job search resources refer to these as a collection of artifacts, which can be presented in an interview as proof of all that you've achieved. By incorporating these artifacts into a portfolio as part of your branding package, you are painting a picture or a landscape of your career journey for both the employer and yourself. A portfolio gives you the opportunity to organize your skills and accomplishments in a visually appealing, professional, and creative way. In the past, you may have associated portfolios with industries like art, media, and design; however, in today's market, portfolios are being used by many job seekers, and can be effective self-marketing tools in every field. Although a portfolio is not often considered a mandatory component of the job search process, it offers many different benefits, both personally and professionally, and creates a positive impression in a job interview:

- **It acts as a persuasive marketing tool.**

Your portfolio demonstrates evidence of your qualifications and showcases your accomplishments in an organized and interesting way. Showing pieces of your portfolio to a hiring committee in an interview setting can set you apart from other candidates.

- **It keeps you organized.**

By having all of your documentation in one convenient place, you are able to easily reference or provide employers with the information they are seeking before, during, or after your interview in a timely manner.

- **It reinforces your personal brand.**

As a supplement to the rest of your job search documents, your portfolio strengthens an employer's image of your personal brand, impresses upon them what you have to offer, and increases the odds of you being noticed.

- **It helps you to prepare for an interview.**

Reviewing the documents that you have included in your portfolio can be a good way to prepare for an interview. Reading over your portfolio and referencing your many accomplishments will be helpful in identifying supportive examples when answering interview questions.

- **It builds confidence.**

Being able to see all the things that you've achieved will make you feel proud, and make you more aware of your strengths. Your sense of accomplishment will translate into positivity and confidence when interacting in an interview and networking setting.

# PORTFOLIO TYPES

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There are two main types of portfolios; both types offer different advantages and both are beneficial in setting you apart from the rest of the crowd. The two major portfolio types include:

- **Print Portfolio:** In a print or hardcopy portfolio, materials are presented in physical form, typically in a binder or folder and individual pieces can be referenced directly in an interview setting.
- **Digital Portfolio:** In a digital portfolio, electronic copies of your documents are housed on an online platform, this can be a website, blog or USB flash drive. Including a link on your other job search documents will allow employers to research you further.

# PORTFOLIO SECTIONS

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There are different ways that you can organize your portfolio and various sections that you can include when developing your content. Keep in mind, not all sections will be applicable to you and portfolios can look different depending on the industry and the job. For example, if you are an Early Childhood Educator seeking employment with the school board, you will notice that they ask for a specific list of portfolio items on their job application. If you are in an industry that relies on portfolios more heavily, your best bet is to identify and follow the industry expectations. Once you have familiarized yourself with your target market and aligned that with your professional aspirations, think about what your audience wants to see. As a baseline for getting started, here are sections you should consider including when creating your portfolio:

- **Title Page:** You should include a cover page that indicates a title (Job Search Portfolio or Career Portfolio), your name, and your contact information.
- **Table of Contents:** List all the sections of your portfolio and separate each section with dividers. This will allow you and the person viewing your portfolio to quickly and easily access the relevant information. In your digital portfolio hyperlink your table of contents.
- **Profile:** There are several variations of what a profile can look like. Consider writing a short biography, a mission statement explaining who you are, or a professional philosophy about your vision of the future in this industry.
- **Career Goals, Professional Development Plan:** Include 3-5 career-focused professional goals. Be as specific as possible.
- **Resume, Cover Letter:** Include copies of your most up-to-date documents.
- **Education, Certificates, Training, or Professional Development Documents**
- **Community Service or Volunteer Experience**
- **Licenses, Memberships, Transcripts, Scholarships**
- **References**



# PORTFOLIO CONTENT

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Consider the following examples to provide evidence of your skills and accomplishments:

- **Work Performance Documents:** Employer evaluations, awards, customer satisfaction surveys, thank you notes, appreciation emails, and letters of recommendation.
- **Samples of Work:** Team projects, presentations, written reports, webpages, blogs, volunteer and community service, images, and graphics.

# PORTFOLIO USES

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## **Before the interview:**

- Select pieces of your portfolio that are most relevant for the job or create a short version of your master portfolio.
- Indicate that you have a professional portfolio on your resume or cover letter, and provide a link if your portfolio is accessible online.
- Ask the employer if you will need access to internet or a computer.
- Practise answering interview questions using your portfolio.

## **During the Interview:**

- Keep the focus on you, not on the portfolio. Your portfolio is supplementary and should be incorporated at the end of your answer when applicable.
- Ask permission of the interviewer(s) before showing items from your portfolio.
- Use your portfolio strategically; you do not need to reference it for every question.
- Provide individual items to interviewer(s), avoid giving over your whole portfolio.
- Be prepared to leave copies of your documents with the employer after the interview.

# PORTFOLIO TIPS FOR PRINT AND DIGITAL

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- **Target your approach.**

Focus on keeping your portfolio relevant to your career goals. Selectively choose items from your portfolio to strategically strengthen your points related to the job you're interviewing for.

- **Make sure it's organized and user-friendly.**

Ensure that your print portfolio and digital portfolio are easily accessible, compatible, and easy for employers to navigate.

- **Maintain formatting and consistency.**

Maintain consistency throughout your portfolio, indicate appropriate headings, don't over use bold, italics, and underline, use the same font type and size throughout, and ensure that you balance white space appropriately.

- **Ensure a professional presentation.**

Ensure that your documents are neat and organized. A visually appealing and well organized web layout will draw in the attention of the reader. Use text that is easy to read, separate your sections in a logical manner and use crisp and vivid imagery. For print, use dividers and page protectors. Consider having your document secured in a folder or binder. Sheet protectors will allow you to neatly store several copies of each document that can be given to the interviewers as required. You can also add or remove items easily when updating or targeting for each job.

- **Provide copies.**

In your print and digital portfolio's never provide your original documents; make several copies of each of your documents in advance and/or have back up's of your electronic files.

- **Keep it up-to-date.**

Your portfolio should be maintained over the course of your education and career. Make it a point to update it on a regular basis and you will be prepared to showcase your skills whenever the next opportunity presents itself.

When selecting an online platform to house your portfolio, ensure that you research your options thoroughly. Ideally, you want a platform that:

- will allow for changes to be uploaded quickly
- has a cloud based backup and portability
- is user friendly and easily navigated
- can handle multiple multimedia formats
- can be viewed on mobile devices

There are a number of online services, many of which are free of charge, that allow you to create your own customizable website or portfolio. Explore some of the following sites before getting started:

- **Free alternatives:** Padlet, Google Sites, Microsoft One Note
- **Free website builders:** Weebly, Wix
- **Digital portfolios:** bulb, myeFolio, mahara, carbon made
- **Blog:** WordPress
- **Design based:** dribbble, Coroflot, Behance, Crevado, FolioLink

# CHAPTER 3: DIVERSIFY YOUR JOB SEARCH STRATEGY

## In this chapter, YOU will:

- Learn how and where to look for a job.
- Understand the value of using multiple methods of job searching.
- Create and utilize an effective networking strategy.
- Use online profiles to expand your network and increase your job search success.
- Identify ways of gaining practical experience.
- Recognize how to manage your job search and reduce your stress.

# JOB SEARCH

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Chances are, you've tried your hand at job searching at one time or another and (to your dismay) you've come to the conclusion that finding a job isn't an easy task! You may feel this way because you've spent countless hours applying to hundreds of opportunities only to be left with no response. The bottom line is, people want to hire you, but it's time to change your approach. Instead of focusing on the quantity of applications you have submitted, start focusing on the quality of applications you're sending out. Without a clear understanding of the hidden job market, the importance of using a variety of job search methods, and a tailored approach, you are at risk for increasing your frustrations and decreasing your motivation to find work.

The hidden job market, which according to Statistics Canada accounts for 65-80% of available jobs, suggests that an unprecedented number of jobs are no longer being publically posted. More often than not, positions are being filled internally, by referral, or through direct contacts. Therefore, when we rely on conventional methods of job searching, such as online job search websites, we risk competing against the largest pool of candidates for the least amount of available opportunities. Diversifying your job search means opening the door to a more responsive market and exposes you to additional opportunities, resulting in a shorter, more successful search. Before diving more deeply into how and where to look for work, you need to be able to answer the following questions:

- What are my job goals or ideas?
- What are the qualifications required for these positions? Do I meet them?
- What companies do I want to work for?

Once you have a better idea about your job goals, you can more productively start your search. In the following sections, job searching has been divided into two major approaches – your online job search strategy and your networking strategy. Consider using the following methods the next time you're looking for work.

# ONLINE JOB SEARCH STRATEGY

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## HireAC

First and foremost, HireAC is an online job board exclusive to Algonquin students and graduates. You can visit this website through your ACSIS account on a regular basis to view a variety of current full-time, part-time, and summer employment opportunities in a variety of industries and career fields. You can set up alerts to be notified when opportunities in your field are posted. Furthermore, you can also find out about job fairs, networking events, and employer information sessions on the Upcoming Events/Workshops Calendar.

## Employer Websites

Make a list of target employers and visit their websites often. Employers often receive so many resumes that they don't always need to post their positions to a job board to attract interest. Therefore, by creating a list of employers that you may be interested in working for and frequently visiting their "Careers" section, you will ensure that you are seeing any available positions. If their websites have a resume bank, be sure to upload your resume. There are a number of different resources to help you develop a list:

- Business directories, such as the [Yellow Pages](#)
- [LinkedIn company directory](#)
- [The Ottawa Business Journal's annual Book of Lists](#)
- Professional associations

List your top organizations and keep track of their information:

Organization	Contact Name	Date Contacted	Where did I hear about the company	Notes / Follow Up

## Online Job Boards and Search Engines

Although online postings are among the most highly populated job search methods used by job seekers, they only account for a small percentage of available jobs. Nonetheless, they are still a convenient way to look for employment and for certain companies this may be the only option. Once you have entered a site, you would typically use a search engine to find advertised jobs by inputting a keyword and location. Most of these online sites allow you to post your resume directly with the idea that an employer or recruiter may match you to a position and contact you directly. Review the following recommendations to improve your response rate:

- While setting up and receiving targeted email alerts may be helpful, ensure that if you've posted your resume, you are updating your information regularly, as many recruiters are looking at resumes according to how recently they were posted.
- Jobs are often listed by a range of different titles; remember to change your search criteria frequently to maximize your search results.
- Lastly, don't wait until the closing date to apply; the early bird catches the worm. If looking to fill an opening immediately, employers may start reviewing applications before the position closes.
- For a list of common websites visit [Employment Support Centre](#) website under the Students and Grads tab.

**When you are using and creating profiles on multiple sites, it can be overwhelming to remember all the information. Record it in a safe space on your computer by using a tracking tool like this:**

Web Site	User Name	Password	Security Question (sometimes)	Answer (only if question)	Comments

## Professional Association Websites

Many industries and occupations have professional associations further to providing information on professional standards. These can be a valuable resource in your job search. Becoming a member of a professional association links you to members who have similar interests and qualifications. Typically, on a professional association website, you will find information about relevant job listings, upcoming conferences and events, career development opportunities,



industry trends, publications, and newsletters. Attending conferences and events may lend favour to potential networking opportunities. Learning industry trends could prove useful in your next job interview, and accessing member directories may assist you in setting up an informational interview to gain valuable industry-specific career advice.

# ONLINE JOB SEARCH SAFETY

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The [Canadian Competition Bureau](#) reports that “thousands of Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life are defrauded each year.” Learn to recognize employment scams to protect yourself from financial loss, wasted time, and energy.

## How to Protect Yourself

Be an informed and proactive job seeker. Research and assess every job posting, company, and employment agency to which you apply. Contact them yourself directly if necessary. When in doubt about the job posting, company, or any interactions with an employer proceed with caution!

- Do not accept a job offer without being interviewed in person, over the phone, or via Skype.
- A legitimate employer typically requests personal information only after an interview has been completed, references have been verified, and an offer of employment has been made and signed. Personal information includes: SIN number, date of birth, driver’s license or health card, and banking information.
- Do not use your own money to pay suppliers or transfer funds.
- Never accept payment in advance of starting a job or for services that have not been completed.
- Sounds too good to be true? Seek advice from a trusted source, such as a parent, a professor, or the Employment Support Centre at Algonquin College.

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT AN EMPLOYMENT SCAM?

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- End all communication with the employer and if personal information was disclosed, change all of your passwords and monitor your accounts to be on the safe side.
- If you have sent money to a fraudulent employer, contact your bank or credit card company immediately for further instructions.
- Gather all records of the fraud and contact the police to report it: [The Ottawa Police Organized Fraud Section](#) and/or [RCMP – Reporting Scams and Frauds](#).

## Additional Resources:

To learn more, take a look at the following sites:

- [Consumer Protection Ontario](#)
- [The Little Black Book of Scams](#)
- [Ottawa Police – Common Scams](#)

# NETWORKING

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For many of us, just thinking about networking can make us break out into a cold sweat. However, networking is the simple act of exchanging information, specifically for the purpose of cultivating productive, organic, and lasting relationships. When you develop and maintain strong and productive relationships across many different facets of your life, you increase your chances of those relationships positively impacting your career goals. It is important to recognize that engaging in networking opportunities will not lead to results overnight; it is a long-term strategy that will allow you to build a strong community of individuals and professionals that, when accessed properly, can support you in your career development journey.

When you learn how to network effectively, you bypass the internet job application gatekeepers and increase your chances of getting interviewed. It's about leveraging the connections you already have, who can confidently attest to your past performance and future potential. Furthermore, it's also about putting yourself out there and using your connections to persistently and continually expand your networks. Even though we know that networking is a necessary component of uncovering the hidden job market, many of us still find it uncomfortable and question whether what we are doing is right. Below, you will learn how to prepare yourself for both planned and unplanned networking interactions, as well as identify many different networking activities that you can incorporate into your overall job search strategy.

# PREPARING TO NETWORK

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The first step in preparing for any networking situation is knowing what you want to say. Before considering the different networking approaches, let's focus on how to articulate what you can bring to the table.

## Create a 30-second Elevator Pitch

Let's reflect on the idea behind this. If you were riding in an elevator with someone you were interested in working for, would you be able to effectively convince the employer of what you can contribute in a way that will make them want to hire you or learn more about you? This is a very strategic way to impress your connections and it shows that you're prepared by being able to articulate what you can do, explain what you can offer, and describe what your goals are, all in a 20-30 second timeframe. This technique is transferable to many direct employer contact situations, including cold-contacting, career fairs, employer information sessions, online and in-person networking, and even running into someone at the grocery store! To prepare your pitch, ask yourself the following questions:

- **What do you do?**  
Introduce yourself by first and last name. Provide a brief overview of your present situation, i.e. what program you are taking and what level you are in, or what your current position is.
- **What are your greatest strengths and qualifications?**  
Explain accomplishments from your experiences and what skills you bring to the table. You can draw on examples from your academic, employment, placement, and volunteer experiences.
- **What are you looking for or looking to do?**  
Make a connection between your skills and what you can offer the company. Reflect on your relevant career aspirations or goals.
- **What are your next steps?**  
Mention your desire to connect with this person, whether it be to email your resume, set up an information interview, or add them as a contact on LinkedIn.

You don't want to sound robotic, therefore, to sound more natural, make point form notes to jog your memory but avoid recounting your points verbatim. Practising your elevator pitch will allow you to feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar or unplanned situation and ultimately, make you feel more confident about your skills.

## Elevator Pitch Example

### Example 1:

Hi, my name is Kristy Goodwin. I am in my graduating semester at Algonquin College in the Early Childhood Education program, and I am so excited about a career where I can support children in such an integral time in their development. Recently, I completed my third field placement at the Ottawa Catholic School Board, and my Supervisor was impressed with my ability to naturally incorporate play-based learning into my interactions with the children. Seeing as I am committed to fostering curiosity through exploration,

I look forward to expanding on these ideas in the next company I work for. I really enjoyed speaking with you today; can I send you an invitation to connect on LinkedIn?

### Example 2:

Hi my name is Ada Mohamed. I recently graduated from the Business Accounting program at Algonquin College. I have a wealth of international field experience from my home country. Recently, I was reading that your company has businesses all around the world and you are considered a global leader in accounting and payroll solutions. I would be interested in speaking with you further about some of my ideas, as I feel that my diverse perspectives on effective international business practices would be an added benefit to my next employer. I have some questions about your organization, would you have time to schedule a brief meeting to discuss this further?

# METHOD 1: PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

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Now that you have a better idea of how to describe to your contacts what you can offer, here are some different methods you can use to put your 30-second elevator pitch into practice.

## **Method 1: Tap into your personal and professional networks.**

There is really no better place to start than with the people in your life that already know you. Develop a broad list of contacts including family, friends, neighbours, classmates, professors, current and previous coworkers and managers, and people you have met through various extracurricular, social, religious, and business activities. After you've developed your list, spend time talking to the people in your network and inform them that you are looking for work and let them know what kind of work you are looking for. Organize your network contacts and communicate regularly about your current needs, so that they can assist you better.

### **Here are some ways that you can utilize your existing networks:**

- Ask your network contacts for information or referrals to companies or industries and job leads.
- Request an introduction from your network contacts. Ask if they can call or email people within their networks to introduce you.
- Research your network contacts' connections and inquire about people who are of interest to you.
- Always keep your networks informed of how they have helped you and thank them often for their efforts.
- Help your network too. Share any contacts, advice, or job leads that would be of interest to them.

# METHOD 2: INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

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## Method 2: Conduct informational interviews.

Informational interviewing involves speaking to people who work in the field that you want to learn more about. To be clear, you are not interviewing for a job, you are interviewing an employer as a way to gather more insight about the field you are interested in. This will allow you to make more informed career choices, gather the information necessary to write more effective cover letters and resumes, and be better prepared for future job interviews. Informational interviews can also be a great way to make valuable industry contacts and many people in the workforce are open to sharing information about their careers – especially if it can help someone else map out their own career path. If you leave a good impression, your name may later be passed along to someone else who is in a position to interview you, however, don't go in expecting this to happen. In order to leave the best impression possible, you must be prepared and act professionally. Here are some steps to consider before, during, and after your informational interview:

### Before the interview

- Conduct research on different companies or individuals and identify who you would like to interview.
- Request an informational interview and explain how you obtained their information.
- Call or send them an email, explaining why you are interested in setting up the interview and what you hope to gain from it, be clear about what you're requesting, such as more information about a job or profession.
- Begin with a professional salutation, "Dear Ms. Grayson."
- Briefly introduce yourself, your program or credentials, career interests, and goals.
- If you want to meet them in person or speak by phone, tell them how much time you'll need, for example, 15 to 20 minutes.
- Confirm the time and location.
- Ask them to recommend other people or sources of information if they can't speak with you directly.



## During the interview

- Similar to an actual interview, arrive early and dress in professional attire.
- Be clear that you only want information; you can discuss your skills and experience, but do not fish for opportunities, let the employer initiate any conversations regarding available opportunities.
- Come prepared by doing some background research on the person you're interviewing, the organization they work for, and the work they do. Use your list of questions to guide your conversation.
- Have your resume on hand in case your contact wants to see it.
- Manage your time and respect their time; only take as much time as you've scheduled.

## After the interview

- Send a thank you letter right away (see Chapter 4 for a sample).
- Move forward with two ideas from your interview, for example, people to talk to, volunteer opportunities to look into, or websites to visit.
- Identify what worked well and what you will change for next time.
- Connect on LinkedIn and reach out to your contact and let them know how they assisted you.

## Possible informational interview questions

Here is a list of potential questions that you can ask the person that you will be meeting with. Questions can vary in topic from advice, to information on qualifications, job duties, organizational structure, industry trends, and work culture. Since your meeting is intended to be brief, select around five questions in advance that reflect the information you are most interested in gaining. Keep track of the time in your meeting and use your discretion on how many questions you ask.

- What suggestions do you have for someone trying to get a job in this field?
- What are the personal qualities of people who are successful in this field?
- What are the core skills you look for on a resume?
- What education and training is needed? What kinds of backgrounds do people in this organization have?

- How would you describe a typical week in terms of percentages spent on different duties?
- What do you enjoy most about this position or organization?
- What are some tasks or projects that you are currently working on?
- What skills can I focus on to help me prepare or excel for work in this field/industry/job?
- What would entry-level work involve in this field?
- How does one advance in this field? What does the typical career path look like?
- What advice would you give to someone with my educational/professional background?
- What is the work culture like in your organization/industry?
- Are there any resources, such as websites, industry associations, or organizations that I should use?
- What is the most effective way to stay connected to current events and industry news?
- What kinds of experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend for someone pursuing a career in this field?
- Can you suggest any other ways to obtain relevant experience?
- Given my background, is there anyone else or any other organizations that you would recommend that I talk to?

## Informational interview example:

### Example 1

Dear Ms. Grayson,

Hello, my name is Gary Patterson and I am conducting informal interviews with employers in my field to gain information on the industry. We met briefly at the Career Networking Fair, hosted by Algonquin College, and you provided me with your business card.

I recently graduated from the Office Administration program at Algonquin College and I feel that your organization would be a good fit with my career interests.

I was wondering if there would be a convenient time to meet with you for 15-20 minutes, either in person or over the phone, to discuss a few questions I have.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,  
Gary Patterson

### Example 2:

Dear Mr. Rodriguez,

My Name is Chen Lee, a mutual acquaintance of ours, Phyllis Parker, has recommended that I call you to speak with you about your position as a Developmental Service Worker with Partners in Parenting.

I am currently studying to become a Developmental Service Worker at Algonquin College. Recently, I have been researching your organization, as I am very interested in working with at-risk youth in the foster care system, but there is only so much you can learn without talking to someone who is actually doing the job.

I'd really appreciate it if you could answer some questions I have about what it is really like to do this job on a day-to-day basis. Would you have 15-20 minutes to speak over the phone or meet in person?

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Chen Lee

### What to say when an information interview is declined:

"Thank you for taking my call. I realize I've caught you at a bad time. Would there be a more convenient time when I could call back?" or "Would there be anyone else I could speak with?"

If they give you the name of someone else, you can ask "Would you mind if I tell them that you suggested I call?"

If there are no other leads, reiterate your thanks again.

# METHOD 3: COLD CONTACTING

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## Method 3: Try cold contacting.

With regards to a job search, a cold contact is the action of contacting a person who you have not previously met for the purpose of finding out information. Cold contacts can be made in person by stopping by and asking to speak with the Hiring Manager. Cold contacts can also be made both over the phone and by email to inquire about potential job opportunities. This method can increase your effectiveness greatly, as calling 30 companies to find out if they are hiring is much more efficient than visiting them. Cold contacting is more useful in some industries than others; the art of cold calling can be particularly intimidating and is often accompanied by a fear of rejection. To account for this, have an idea of what you would ask about and what you can offer. Don't be discouraged if your efforts only result in a few positive responses, that's likely all you need to secure an interview. You can prepare for cold contacting by:

- Introducing yourself.
- Asking about any potential job opportunities.
- Providing information on what you can offer, your background, and experience.
- Proposing a possible meeting.

Example of a cold call script:

Hi there, my name is Amina Burlison. Could I speak to the Manager or the Shift Supervisor?

**If your conversation continues:**

I noticed that your restaurant recently opened up in my neighbourhood and I am wondering if you are hiring any servers at this time. I have over two years of experience in customer service environments and previous experience serving. Is there a time that I could meet with you to discuss this opportunity or drop off my resume and introduce myself in person?

**If the company is not hiring, you could follow up with your thanks and a question or two:**

- Thank you very much for your time.
- Are there specific times of the year where you hire more?
- Would you mind if I called back in a few weeks to see if there are more opportunities available?
- Is there anything you can advise me to do to increase my chances of securing work with your company?

# METHOD 4: SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

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## Method 4: Use social networking websites.

Social media and the ability to network through various online platforms have opened up a whole new world of opportunities that you didn't have access to through traditional networking methods. Social networking websites allow you to more easily connect with people you may not have otherwise known. It allows you to more efficiently update your contacts on your current employment status and it is seen as a more convenient and acceptable way to exchange information on a regular basis. More often than not, employers are using LinkedIn to search for, pre-screen, and evaluate candidates. Among the most common social media sites are LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

### Use these platforms to:

- Research companies and people of interest.
- Reach out to your networks, exchange information, and maintain regular contact.
- Post status updates or send messages that indicate you are looking for a work or information.
- Search for jobs that are being advertised and apply directly through the platforms.
- Connect with people you don't already know.
- Participate in discussions or follow companies and groups.
- Create and post content.

# METHOD 5: CAREER RELATED FAIRS & EVENTS

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## Method 5: Attend job or career fairs, employer information sessions, and networking events.

A career fair is normally when many employers gather at the same venue to promote their organizations with the intention of recruiting candidates. An employer information session is characteristically when one employer delivers a presentation about their organization to a group of interested candidates; this is often followed by a question and answer period, a networking session, or a brief interview. A networking event, which can be general or industry-specific in nature, offers a platform for making new connections and the opportunity to speak with other industry professionals in a more formal setting. In a world that has turned mostly online, getting out and meeting people face-to-face, where the expectations are already set out for you, offers great value in your job search.

Employers are prepared to speak with you directly about your experience and skills and it becomes the perfect opportunity to not only network, but also set yourself apart from your competition. As you will be one of many attendees, the pace may be very quick, so understand that you won't have a lot of time with each employer:

- Be well-researched on who will be attending.
- Know what you want to say to each employer.
- Present yourself professionally.
- Have engaging, open-ended questions prepared.
- Secure contact information so that you can follow up and remind them of your conversation.
- For more information on upcoming events check out: [HireAC](#), [Eventbrite](#), [Meetup](#), [TenThousandCoffees](#).



### **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

Check out the Employment Support Centre's LinkedIn page to find out more about upcoming events and workshops!

[linkedin.com/company/ac-employment-support-centre/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ac-employment-support-centre/)

# METHOD 6: RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

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## **Method 6: Register with recruitment agencies.**

A recruitment or a placement agency typically acts as the “middle man” between you and an employer. The employer hires the agency to assist them in finding suitable candidates to fill their positions, reducing the time and resources they would have to put into recruitment. There are many different agencies that you can use; some may be specific to a certain type of work (i.e. engineering, legal, administration, and labour). Common practice for many agencies involves meeting you one-on-one and conducting a brief interview to set up a profile and then informing you if and when an opportunity presents itself that matches your profile.

Many agencies in the Ottawa area post government opportunities. If this is something you are interested in, obtaining a short-term contract may help you get your foot in the door and put relevant experience on your resume. Some agencies will suggest that you apply to their openings online. They are bombarded with new clients every day, that is why it is essential make sure to gain a contact name within the agency and follow up frequently when you see positions that match your skill set. Depending on your job goal, agencies can be another helpful method, but you should never put all your eggs in one basket, it should be one of many methods that you are using.



# METHOD 7: GAIN EXPERIENCE

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## Method 7: Gain experience.

An excellent way to build your professional reputation, obtain references, refine your career goals, and build long-term networks is by gaining practical experience, especially if you have limited networks to begin with. Each of these opportunities will provide you with a solid network of contacts and valuable industry advice even before you start searching for your career.

Depending on your program, experiential learning can be an optional or mandatory part of your course curriculum and a prime opportunity to gain relevant experience. Experiential learning supports students in gaining practical, hands-on learning opportunities that help them transition more fluidly to employment once they graduate. Typically, you are placed in a structured, simulated workplace environment, and exposed to the real-life demands of the job. You apply concepts that you've learned in your program and gain employability and interpersonal skills that are required to be successful in the workforce. Here are some examples of common experiential learning opportunities common to Algonquin College:

- **Apprenticeships:** You are sponsored by an employer to complete on-the-job and in-classroom training in the skilled trades.
  - Example: Students are sponsored by an employer as part of the cabinetmaker trade program.
- **Clinical placements:** You receive hands-on training and supervision in a clinical setting.
  - Example: Nursing students receive practical training at local health centres.
- **Co-ops:** You complete alternating periods of academic study and work experience in fields of business, industry, or government.
  - Example: Computer engineering students complete four-month paid work terms with technology companies.
- **Field placements:** You receive hands-on training and supervision in a field-related organization.
  - Example: Social Service Worker students are offered field placements in social services or victim services agencies.
- **Applied research projects:** You participate in a research project where you apply the latest knowledge and technology in the creation of useful products, services, and processes.

- Example: Students are approached by a fitness company to create a virtual personal training app to track workouts.
- **Practicums:** You integrate theory and practice and receive supervision in a work setting.
  - Example: Early Childhood Education students complete practice teaching courses to gain in-class experience in a public school.
- **Workplace simulations:** You practice knowledge and skills in a simulated workplace environment.
  - Example: Students in the Dental Hygiene program practise on life-like patient models in a simulated clinic.

**If your program does not include an experiential learning component, there are other ways of gaining experience. These include:**

- **Part-time and summer employment:** Employers are looking past the knowledge and skills you've gained in school, they are interested in seeing that you have obtained real-world experience. Securing a summer or part-time job while completing your studies will demonstrate to the employer that you have developed the employment readiness skills they are looking for. Gaining experience in different interest areas will also help to solidify your career goals and expand your connections.
- **Job shadowing:** Job shadowing is an opportunity for you to observe working professionals in their environment throughout their typical work day or week. This allows you to process information about an occupation and clarify your job goal. You are able to see hands-on how your learned skills translate into a particular work environment and job. To inquire about job shadowing opportunities, reach out to people in your network or contact companies of interest.
- **Volunteer opportunities:** Volunteering your time allows you to directly impact your community, meet new people, learn new valuable skills, advance your career, and increase your confidence. Additionally, volunteering introduces you to different environments and roles within an organization that will help you identify your interests within the field. You have the chance to cultivate valuable leadership opportunities through rewarding experiences. If you are interested in volunteering visit the Volunteer Centre, contact specific companies of interest, search their websites, or connect with community volunteer organizations like [Volunteer Ottawa](#).



## SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

Contact the Volunteer Centre to find out more information about volunteer opportunities, Global and Community Projects, and check out the Volunteer Database.

[algonquincollege.com/achub](http://algonquincollege.com/achub)

- **Mentorship:** Last, but not least, a good way to gain quality advice and industry know-how is by finding yourself a mentor. A mentor is someone who willingly shares their skills, knowledge, expertise, advice, and professional contacts with you throughout your career journey. A mentor can assist you in setting realistic career goals and making smart career decisions. Their wisdom can be beneficial, from finding a job after you graduate to moving up the company ladder. You can look within your current network for a mentor; this could be a professor, work or volunteer supervisor, or a family friend. If no one in your immediate network is in a position or industry that might interest you, research professionals on LinkedIn, reach out to your Alumni and Friends Network, or ask for referrals and contact them directly.



## SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

Contact with the Alumni and Friends Network to find out more about successful graduates from your program.

[algonquincollege.com/alumni](http://algonquincollege.com/alumni)

# METHOD 8: BUSINESS NETWORKING CARDS

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## Method 8: Make business networking cards.

You might be thinking, isn't it only appropriate to have a business card if I have a job? The answer is no; as a job seeker, a business card is a great way to leave a lasting impression while also giving the employer or industry professional a way to contact you in the future. Sure, handing in a resume provides more detailed information, but providing a tailored business card will likely end up in their wallet or their pocket versus getting lost in that giant stack of resumes they've already been given. When they empty their pockets, they may be more inclined to think of you and the conversation that was had. It is essential to include your name, phone number, and email address on your business cards. Beyond your contact information, you can consider adding a title, or the program you are in, areas of knowledge, your LinkedIn URL, personal website, online portfolio, or blog links. Be creative, select colours and styles that match your personality and your industry, and add a logo or design to really emphasize your brand.



### SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

Get your business networking cards printed at The Print Shop.  
[algonquincollege.com/printshop](http://algonquincollege.com/printshop)

Here is an example of a student's business networking card:



# LINKEDIN

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LinkedIn is a social networking website with the largest online professional network in the world, the fastest-growing demographic being students and recent graduates. LinkedIn provides you with the resources to access various professional networks, key decision-makers, recruiters, and learning opportunities that will help you in your search for meaningful work. Just having a LinkedIn account will not guarantee you a job, however, many recruiters have successfully hired using a social network and, the largest percentage hired using LinkedIn. As this tool continues to evolve, creating a captivating profile is essential to effectively self-market, generate connections, identify leads, grow your professional brand, and make a professional online impression.

## LinkedIn Profile Essentials

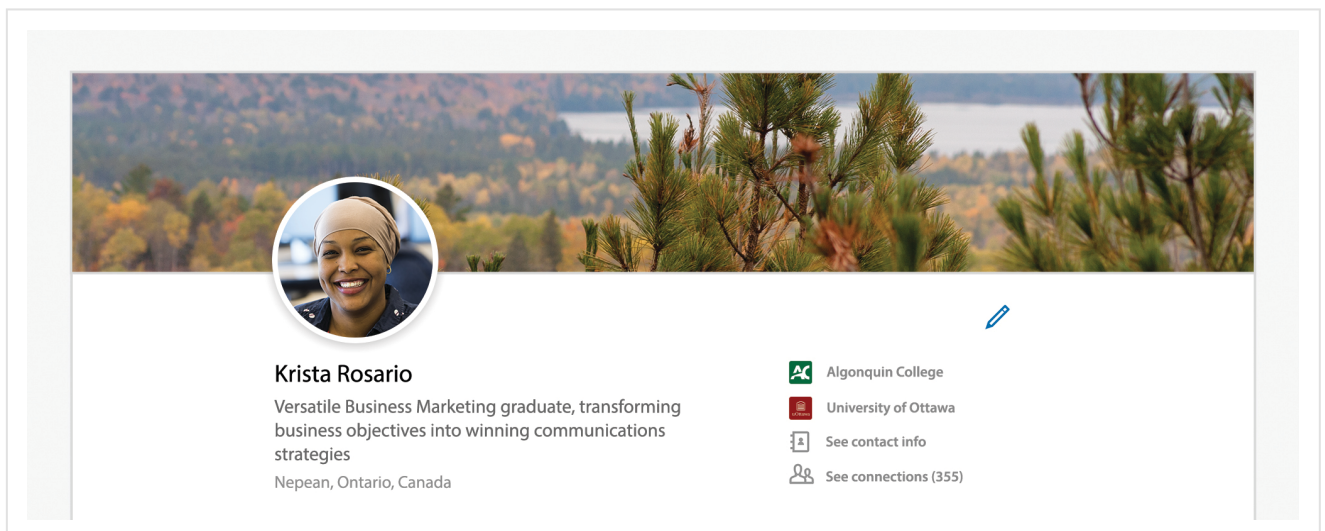
Aim for an All-Star rating. There is nothing more disappointing to your audience than an incomplete or poorly maintained profile. Make sure you have completed all of the suggested sections to generate an All-Star rating; this will increase your visibility and encourage other professionals to connect with you. If you want to be 40x more likely to be viewed, pay attention to your Profile Completion Meter and ensure the following sections are complete:

- Skills (+5), current position, two past positions, photo, location, summary, education, industry, and location
- At least 50 connections

Use the following tips to create an effective profile that will help you stand out:

- **Come up with a targeted and attractive headline.**  
Don't fall into the mistake of using your automatically generated job title and company name as your headline. You must stand out and grab the attention of the reader by describing what you do, and what added benefits you can offer the reader. Try to be rich with key words when possible, as well as clear, intentional, and succinct in order to fit within the 120-character limit.
- **Increase your views with a good photo.**  
This is often a person's first glimpse of your profile; if you don't have a photo that represents your personal brand, you may be leaving the wrong first impression. With access to high-resolution phone cameras these days, you don't necessarily have to get a professional photo taken. When taking your own headshot:

- Ensure that the quality of the image is clear, you are in a well-lit space, and that the background is not distracting.
  - Look directly at the camera and smile.
  - Avoid wearing accessories like hats or sunglasses that may hide your face.
  - Avoid using a cropped photo from a group picture.
  - Dress appropriately for your career goal.
- **Build a conversational and informative summary.**  
Ask yourself what you want your target audience to know about you. A well-crafted summary is an opportunity for you to highlight your skills, experience, and your future career aspirations while characterizing elements of your personality in the tone you are writing in. When writing your summary consider:
    - Making your first two lines captivating as this is all that is displayed at first glance.
    - Writing in first or third person, keeping in mind first person is seen as more direct and intimate.
    - Incorporating industry keywords in order to be more visible in recruiter searches.
    - Including information on your background, what you can offer, your professional goals and a call to action.



- **Show your experience.**  
Always add rich descriptions to your experience sections. These can reflect the STAR technique you used to develop your resume descriptions. In addition, emphasize the skills

you gained in your day-to-day tasks and include details of your various accomplishments from your paid or unpaid part-time, full-time, or summer work experience. Listing in bullet points is often the preferred format.

- **Share your accomplishments.**

Add in additional sections to showcase some of your other accomplishments that might set you apart from your competition. Including information on additional certifications or awards received can be impressive.

Highlight your project work. Don't minimize your project experience; describe the practical experience you gained so that readers can see how this translates into on-the-job skills. You can provide a relevant URL to the project and connect your team members who are also LinkedIn members.

- **Showcase your education.**

List all of your post-secondary education. Typically after you have completed post-secondary you would not need to list your high school education here. Some employers and recruiters may have a preference for seeking out candidates that graduated from a specific school or program. Notable accomplishments such as achieving a high GPA, or relevant courses can be included in the description to show that you are a high-performing candidate.

- **Promote your skills.**

Paint a picture of what you can offer a recruiter or an employer. Start by listing at least five skills you have learned throughout your academic, volunteer, and work experiences. As you develop more skills, update your profile to reflect this. Identify both soft skills that are transferable from one field to another and hard skills that you learned during formal training or on the job and ensure that they relate to your job goal. When your connections endorse you for your skills, you increase your credibility and improve your search ranking.

- **Personalize your URL.**

By default, when you start your LinkedIn account you are given a public URL. With the increase in LinkedIn's popularity, you may want to use your URL to promote yourself in the signature of your email address, on your resume, and on your business networking cards. Personalizing your URL allows you to make it shorter and more memorable and ultimately enhances your personal brand.

- **Include Multimedia.**

Make your profile more visually appealing by adding photos, videos, or slideshow presentations. This gives a reader an opportunity to see examples of your work, similar to an online portfolio.

- **Build your connections by common interests and community.**

Don't wait until you graduate to build up your connections, spend time increasing your contacts now. Aim for 50 as you're starting out, but the more connections the better! You can

connect with friends, classmates, professors, or people that you've volunteered and worked with. Be proactive in your approach, you can start by syncing your email contacts to create a list of suggested connections. Only send invitations to those you are comfortable connecting with; avoid randomly adding people that you don't know so that you can keep up-to-date and help each other through recommendations and information about opportunities that are relevant to you.



# USING LINKEDIN FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH

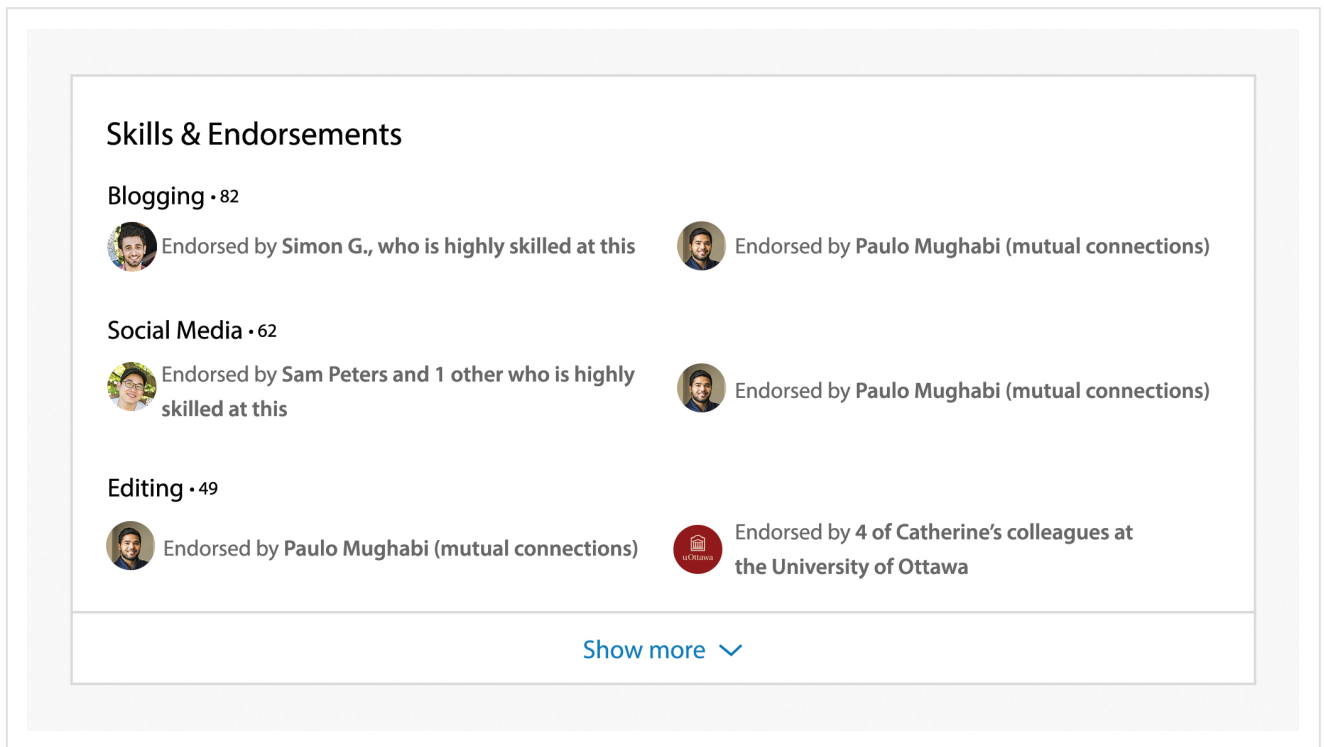
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- **Customize your LinkedIn invitations and connect in a timely manner.**

Always send a personalized message when you're interested in connecting with someone. If you've met them before, make sure to place yourself by reminding them of when and where you've met. If you haven't met before, let them know why you would like to connect (i.e. I see that you are a graduate from the same program, I was wondering what advice you might have for a new graduate looking for work in the field?). After you've met someone, don't wait too long before sending an invitation, your timeliness will ensure that they remember who you are and show your interest.

- **Ask people for endorsements and recommendations and endorse and recommend others.**

There is no better way to build your credibility than to have your connections attest to what you can do. Don't be afraid to ask your connections for endorsements and recommendations, and always offer to reciprocate your request for them. People will be more likely to follow through with your request when they are gaining something out of it too. By having others authenticate your skills and qualifications, you are seen as a more credible professional to your network. When making a request you should be polite, personalize your invitation, and provide ideas of what you would like them to write about. Always send a thank you note afterwards to show your appreciation.



- **Search for jobs.**

Look through LinkedIn's job bank and search for jobs of interest; some employers post exclusively on LinkedIn. Make a note of any existing connections that you have that work at the company you are applying to. Pay particular attention if you are connected to a hiring manager. For instance, are they a 1st or 2nd-degree connection? If so, get in touch with them to show your interest in the role, and find out more about the job and company. Use the knowledge gained from your connections to tailor your job application and make yourself stand out. Under the Jobs tab, don't forget to set your career interests and let recruiters know you're open so recommendations will be more tailored to your goal.

- **Find alumni.**

Narrow your search by date and program and explore where other graduates are working and what types of jobs they are in. This can be a good way to identify companies that have hired previous graduates from your program. Reach out to alumni to connect and ask them to provide you with advice on how they were successful in finding work in their field.

- **Conduct a people search.**

Use LinkedIn to find professionals, and track the career paths of employees before they started working at the company that you're interested in. This information might give you a better idea of what kind of experience or skills the company wants in a new hire.

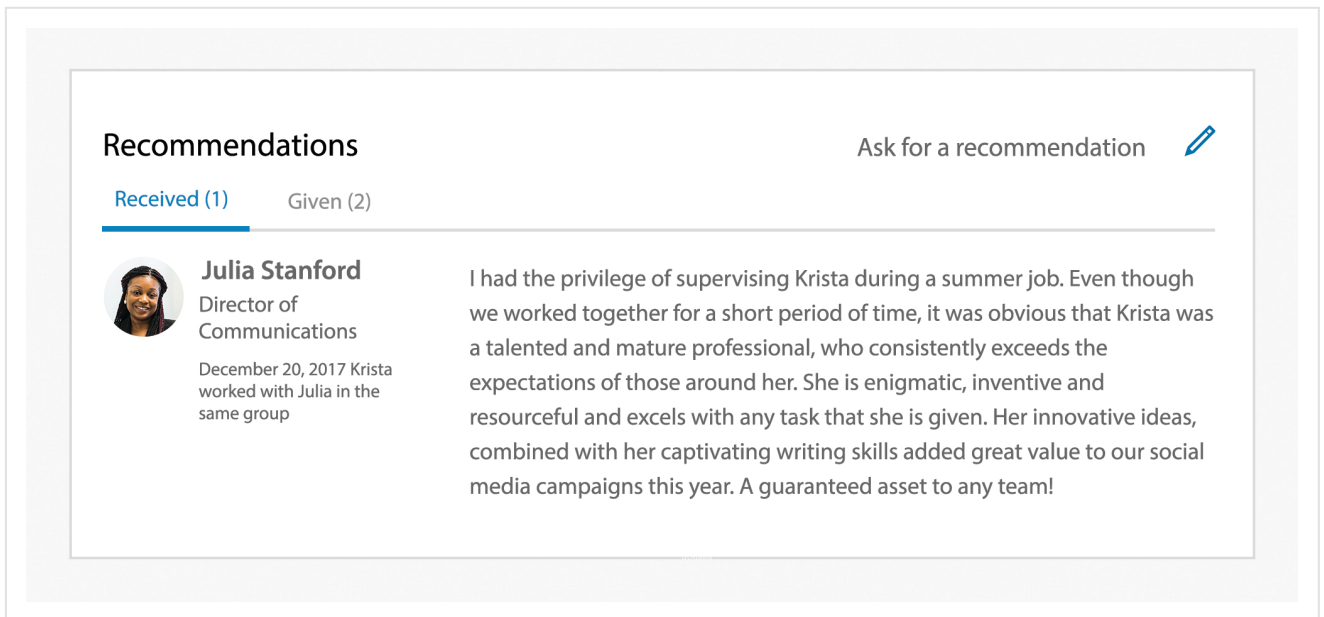
- **Follow companies.**

Search for and follow companies of interest to learn more about a company and the people

that they employ. Company Pages give you an excellent overview of an organization, list job openings, and indicate products and services. For instance, the “Careers” tab allows you to see job postings and testimonials from current employees. This is a great way to get an “insider’s perspective” on a particular company. By following a company, updates about new jobs, products, or events will appear in your news feed on your LinkedIn home page. Use the company pages to help prepare you for your next interview.

- **Stay active.**

It’s not just about who you know; it’s about who knows you. Stay on your network’s radar by updating your LinkedIn status often; you can talk about what you’re reading, working on, and more. Additionally, you can create original content and publish articles on LinkedIn Publisher, you can actively post status updates that are relevant to your target market, and engage in conversations with your network about all kinds of different topics. React to other people’s posts, share, and like regularly.



- **Don’t be a passive participant.**

LinkedIn is meant to be a conversational platform where information and advice can be shared freely. When you create a post or share an article, engage with your network by posing open-ended questions that they can respond to in the comments section. Continue the conversation by replying to as many messages as possible. People want to get to know you, when you engage with them this will increase your visibility and result in more followers. Similarly, spend time reacting and responding to other people’s content as well, and thank them for sharing.

- **Join Groups.**

The obvious benefits of joining groups include sharing knowledge and learning from other

professionals with similar interest areas or expertise. A useful “Groups” feature is that group members can message each other for free, without being connected (with the exception of certain privacy settings). In building rapport with group members by participating in collaborative discussions, you can invite them to connect on LinkedIn and continually grow your network.

- **Be reachable.**

Include other ways you’d like to be contacted, such as an email address or phone number. If you are active on other social media platforms, such as Twitter, you can sync your account. If you have your own website, indicate this in the Contact and Personal Info section as well.

- **Know when to go public.**

You want to show your readers as much as possible to entice them to view your profile and make a connection. Make sure that you have adjusted your settings to show your readers the most important information. That being said, if you’re revamping your profile and you want to launch when it’s fully complete, think about going into private mode until you’ve made the changes.

- **Stay connected with the apps.**

Most of LinkedIn’s website traffic comes from their mobile apps. In addition to the LinkedIn Mobile app, they include a suite of other apps that help you target your approach. Here are some that may be helpful:

- Job Search – Search and apply for jobs
- Lookup – Find, learn about and contact coworkers
- Learning – Personalized recommendations and courses taught by industry experts
- SlideShare – A selection of presentations, infographics, and videos about any topic
- Groups – Access to groups of likeminded individuals
- Pulse – Top industry news

- **Additional Resources**

- [Help Centre](#)
- [Student Blog](#)
- [Student Jobs](#)

# PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

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With all the different social media options out there, managing your web presence and maintaining a professional digital footprint becomes essential in ensuring your job search success. More and more often, employers are googling potential candidates as an informal way of prescreening them. This can be a very quick and easy alternative to find out about a person's professionalism or lack thereof, and can directly impact your chances of finding employment. Ensure that your information is up-to-date and that the images and content you are publicizing across your social media platforms reflects you in a positive and professional light. Spend time virtually cleaning up your accounts before you start your job search!

# NETWORKING TIPS

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- **Do your homework.**

Before attending networking events and job fairs, think about what you would like to achieve out of them. Research organizations or professionals attending and decide which are most appealing to you.

- **Wear interview attire.**

Remember you are trying to leave a lasting and positive impression on your professional contacts. Help them to visualize the professional that you are, by wearing business or business casual attire. Jeans or athletic wear is not appropriate for this type of setting.

- **Turn your cell phone ringer off.**

When you're in the middle of speaking with an employer or industry contact, any interruption can leave a negative impression. Put your device on vibrate and don't take it out of your pocket until you have left the event.

- **Have a strong introduction.**

A smile and firm handshake can be effective; however, take your cue on handshaking from the employer. Some people do not shake hands due to cultural norms or illness/flu season. Introduce yourself and be ready with your 30-second elevator pitch. Be specific; outline your education, skills, experience, and the type of job that interests you. Be prepared to let the employer or industry contact know what value you will bring to their organization.

- **Prioritize your interests and take your time.**

Map out a strategy to visit the industry contacts and employers you are most interested in. Allow yourself enough time to visit with employers at a comfortable pace. Running in and out quickly may not produce the job search results you are looking for.

- **Ask open-ended questions.**

Ask questions that can be answered with more than just a "yes" or "no". You are trying to gain as much information as possible, while maintaining a meaningful conversation with the individual. Don't be afraid to ask questions about their organization and about their industry in general. Ask questions such as: "What is it like to work for your organization?" "What skills do you look for in a potential candidate?" "What is the hiring procedure for your organization?"

- **Bring your resume.**

Bring several copies of your most up-to-date resume with you to a networking event. If you are targeting certain employers or you are aware of a position that is available, tailor your

documents accordingly.

- **Always follow up.**

Ask for business cards and convey that you enjoyed meeting the individual and that you look forward to seeing them again soon. Encourage a future meeting or discussion to further communicate and share ideas or send a customized request on LinkedIn. At this time, you can also provide the individual with your personalized business card as well.

- **Keep an open mind.**

Think outside the box! Consider all employers as a potential contact, no matter what the industry. You never know where a potential opportunity may come up and who the people that you are talking to might be able to connect you with in the future.

- **Build and maintain relationships.**

The goal is to meet people and create connections. Meet fewer people, but invest more energy in each connection. You cannot expect to gain something from someone you just met. Develop a relationship before you start asking about opportunities and ask how you can help them.

# MANAGING YOUR JOB SEARCH

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The job search process can certainly feel like you are riding an emotional rollercoaster. While there may be times when you receive a positive response and feel excited, it is more common and normal that you will experience frustration, anxiety, or general disappointment. These feelings can result from a lack of responses, failing to meet the expectations you had for yourself or the expectations that you feel others had for you, or the weight of being continually rejected. When you experience negative feelings associated with your job search, not only do you tend to become less productive, but your negativity can seep into your interactions with employers. Fortunately, there are some useful strategies you can employ to maintain your motivation and better manage your stress throughout your search.

- **Set goals.**

It can be difficult to maintain momentum in your job search. To ensure that you stay motivated, consider setting daily and weekly goals. Set goals for different job searching efforts, for example, “I will aim to submit two online job applications per day” or “I will make two to four new connections on LinkedIn each week.” Setting and meeting daily goals will help you to believe that you are capable of finding a job and breaking down tasks will help you feel less overwhelmed.

- **Create structure.**

Additionally, it can also be helpful to create a job search routine by scheduling specific times during your day or week that are dedicated specifically to searching for work. You should focus on hours of the day that you have the most energy and the least distractions. While you do want to commit yourself to a reasonable block of time, avoid staring at the computer for too long or you may notice your productivity declining.

- **Stay organized.**

Document your job search efforts as you go. Write down the jobs you’ve applied to, the dates in which you applied, and save a print or electronic copy of the job postings in case you need to refer to them in the future. Similarly, when attending job fairs or networking events, gather the names and contact information of those you spoke with. It is often helpful to use a spreadsheet to track the details of all of the information so that you can follow up. Not only is it good for a point of reference, but it creates a level of accountability. By tracking your efforts, you will notice that you’ve done a lot of work and this will make you feel proud and fuel your motivation. On the other hand, it might also give you an indication that you haven’t been doing as much as you should and make you more responsible in getting back on track. Here is an example of a job search tracking tool that you could use to track your online applications:



Job Title	Company Name	Contact	Date Submitted	Phone #	E-mail	Date Submitted	How Submitted	Application Deadline	S	A

Here is an example of a tracking tool you could use to record your networking contacts:

Name	Job Title	Contact Information	Date Contacted	Comments

- **Figure out what's not working and seek help.**

People often spend months job searching and wonder why they aren't receiving a response. If you're not generating responses, there is probably something about your current strategy that isn't working. Evaluating your strategy and trying something different might be the answer you are looking for. Ask those around you for constructive criticism, identify where you are struggling, and improve it. Take advantage of your resources; book an appointment with the Employment Support Centre to discuss and evaluate your current approach.

- **Take care of yourself.**

Looking for a job can be draining. Make sure you maintain a healthy diet and get enough rest to maintain your drive. You will reduce your stress and increase your positivity by making time for things you like to do, whether this is playing sports, reading a book, watching a movie, or anything else that keeps you motivated.

- **Reach out to your support network.**

When you're feeling really defeated, don't bottle up your job search stress. Instead, share your experiences with a close friend or family member. Chances are they have been in a position where they can relate to your experience. Sometimes a trusted friend can help you challenge your negative beliefs by offering encouragement and support, which can boost your confidence in yourself and the job search process.



### SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

Book an appointment with the Employment Support Center to improve your job search strategy.

[algonquincollege.com/employment](http://algonquincollege.com/employment)

# JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST

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JOB SEARCH PREPARATION ESSENTIALS	DONE	TO DO	Notes
<p><b>JOB/CAREER GOAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have a clear and realistic goal?</li> <li>• Have you researched the labour market in your field <a href="#">Job Bank</a>, <a href="#">Ontario's labour market</a></li> </ul>			
<p><b>RESUME/COVER LETTER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you tailored your documents to include keywords?</li> <li>• Have you had your documents reviewed?</li> <li>• Book an appointment with the Employment Support Centre any week day at 613-727-4723 ext. 7200</li> <li>• Visit the drop-in hours: Tuesday 9:00am – 11:00am, Wednesday 1:00pm – 4:00pm, Thursday 9:00am – 11:00am or 1:00pm – 4:00pm</li> </ul>			
JOB SEARCH ESSENTIALS	DONE	TO DO	Notes
<p><b>HIRE AC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Login through your ACSIS account to view jobs exclusively posted for Algonquin College students: <a href="http://hireac.algonquincollege.com">hireac.algonquincollege.com</a></li> </ul>			
<p><b>ONLINE JOB BOARDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indeed</li> <li>• Charity Village</li> <li>• Job Bank</li> <li>• Government of Canada jobs</li> <li>• <a href="http://gojobs.gov.on.ca">gojobs.gov.on.ca</a> – broken link</li> <li>• City of Ottawa Job</li> </ul>			
<p><b>RESEARCH EMPLOYERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate a list of employers</li> <li>• Visit company websites to see if they have jobs posted that are not advertised on online job boards</li> <li>• Book of Lists</li> </ul>			

<p><b>NETWORKING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm a list of your contacts</li> <li>• Keep in contact with previous professors, program coordinators, supervisors, and colleagues</li> <li>• Connect with professionals for informational interviews</li> <li>• Attend events relevant to your field</li> <li>• Expand your network through social groups: <a href="#">Eventbrite</a>, <a href="#">Meetup</a></li> </ul>			
<p><b>ONLINE NETWORKING/SOCIAL MEDIA (LINKEDIN)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete your profile</li> <li>• Follow companies that relate to your field of interest</li> <li>• Connect with professionals for informational interviews</li> </ul>			
<p><b>JOB FAIRS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HireAC Events Calendar – attend on- and off-campus events</li> </ul>			
<p><b>VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AC Volunteer Centre/Co-Curricular Record</li> <li>• Volunteer Ottawa</li> </ul>			
<p><b>COLD CONTACTS (in person, by email, or by phone)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use business directories, business journals, and professional associations to generate a list: <a href="#">yellowpages</a></li> </ul>			
<p><b>RECRUITMENT AGENCIES (temp or permanent opportunities)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register and follow up regularly (if applicable)</li> </ul>			
<p><b>INTERVIEW ESSENTIALS</b></p>	<p><b>DONE</b></p>	<p><b>TO DO</b></p>	<p><b>NOTES</b></p>
<p><b>INTERVIEW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you scheduled a mock interview?</li> </ul>			

**REFERENCES**

- Have you contacted your references?

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[Download Job Search Checklist](#)

# CHAPTER 4: MASTER YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

In this chapter, YOU will:

- Identify the various types of interviews and interview questions.
- Understand what is required before, during, and after your interview.
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication skills.
- Learn about professional interview attire.
- Recognize and prepare effectively for common interview questions.

# INTERVIEW

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Congratulations, your resume, cover letter, and job search strategy worked! You've landed a job interview. You're excited, and maybe even a little nervous, as you ask yourself, now what? How do I ensure I have the best possible chance of coming out ahead of my competitors?

This section will provide you with a thorough understanding of what you need to know at every stage of the interview process. We will explain the different types of interview formats and provide you with sample questions and answers that will be crucial in increasing your chances of securing your next job. Remember that the interview is a chance for the employer to learn more about you, your skills and experiences, but it is also an opportunity for you to learn more about the company and whether or not this opportunity will be a good match to your current goals and future career aspirations.

There are two major categories that employers are looking to evaluate in a candidate during an interview.

- **Qualifications:** Do you have the required credentials, skills, and abilities in order to perform the job?
- **Personal and career fit:** Do your personal qualities, attributes, and career goals match with what the company is seeking?

# COMMON TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

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There are many different types of interviews being used in today's job market. Understanding the most common interview formats will help you manage your expectations and prepare better.

- **Structured or formal:** This type of interview is very common and is used as a standardized method of comparing multiple candidates. The candidate is invited to attend a face-to-face meeting with the hiring personnel. In this format, an employer develops questions that will help assess the skills and experiences they are seeking to fulfill the requirements of the position. Many employers will have a rubric or scoring system for each question. A score is given based on the appropriateness of the candidates' answers and then these scores are compared as a method of determining the most suitable candidate.
- **Unstructured or informal:** This type of interview is more casual, and may have some prepared questions, but is typically less structured. The questions may be determined or changed depending on the candidate's responses or the direction of the conversation. In this method, the candidate has the opportunity to discuss their skills and qualifications more openly, emphasizing more of what they feel is important.
- **Prescreening, video, or telephone:** In an attempt to narrow the candidate pool, a telephone or video interview may be used for initial screening purposes. This interview format may also be used to interview candidates who don't reside in the same area. When taking part in a video or telephone interview, always remember to ensure your technologies are working and are charged in advance. Remove any distractions from the background. Dress and prepare as you would for an in-person interview.



Preparation is essential in being successful in the interview process. Your research will show the interview committee your initiative, interest, motivation, and resourcefulness.

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- **Panel:** In a panel interview, a group of interviewers, typically two to five people from various positions and roles in the company, will take turns asking questions to one candidate. By having multiple opinions involved in the hiring decision, the employer will have a broader, more objective viewpoint when making a decision on which candidate will be most suitable. During your interview, it is important to engage all of the panelists, therefore, as you answer



each question, ensure that you are shifting your eye contact to address each one of them.

- **Group:** Often the group interview is used in order for an organization to save on time and resources by screening a larger number of candidates at the same time. The structure of a group interview may look different from employer to employer, but typically includes a series of questions to observe how candidates communicate, interact with people, and react under pressure.
- **Performance, testing, or presentation:** This type of interview can be arranged during a separate time or as part of a face-to-face interview. During this time, an interviewer asks the candidate to perform specified tasks related to the job within a limited timeframe. Employers cannot always make a hiring decision solely based on interview performance, therefore, depending on the job requirements, they may decide to test an individual's ability as part of the hiring process. For example, for an administrative assistant position, you may be tested on your ability to use Microsoft Excel, for a hairdressing position you may be asked to perform a haircut, or for a teacher you may be asked to give a presentation.

# BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

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For those of you who are bravely saying to yourself, "I'm just going to wing it!" our advice to you would be to do the opposite. Though it may be exhilarating to take this approach, it will not be the approach that gives you the upper hand in getting the job. Preparation is essential in being successful in the interview process. Your research will show the interview committee your initiative, interest, motivation, and resourcefulness. Before your interview, take a look at the following five suggestions to properly prepare.

## Confirm all the details:

- Verify the details of your interview, ensuring that you have recorded the correct date and time.
- Map out the location and address of the interview in advance to ensure that you will arrive on time.
- Record the names (with correct punctuation) and the titles of the people you will be meeting with and research them beforehand, when possible.
- Ask about the amount of time being allocated for the interview.
- Inquire about whether there will be employment tests and the duration of these tests.

## Review the job description and understand the job requirements:

- Understand the job requirements and be able to demonstrate how your skills and experiences match these requirements.
- Review the Accomplishment Statements on your resume and prepare additional examples of your achievements from previous work, volunteer, or academic studies that relate to the job requirements.

## Research the position and the company:

- Use the company's website to learn about and understand their mandate, mission, vision, values, products, services, and market and be able to relate this to why you want to work

with them.

- Use news sources and social media (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn) to research the recent organizational activity, view discussions, and updates from the company.
- Familiarize yourself with the facts: How long have they been in operation? Who are their clientele? What are their products? Are they a local or international organization?
- See if you know anyone who works at the company, or ask people in your network if they know about the organization.

## Review sample questions, prepare answers, and rehearse:

- Plan and practise your answers as well as your delivery in advance and it will increase your confidence, allow you to articulate more clearly, and will make you overall more comfortable during the interview process.

## Build your confidence and reduce your anxiety:

- Before your interview, practise visualizing yourself performing well, imagine that the interviewers are impressed by your professionalism and your ability to answer the questions with a sense of ease and competency.
- Sit up straight, put your feet flat on the floor, breathe deeply, and exhale through your mouth to slow your heart rate down, this will allow you to focus more clearly on your answers while reducing your nervousness.
- Use positive self-talk, believe in your own awesomeness by repeating to yourself things like, "I'm prepared," "I'm the best candidate for this job," and "I can do this."

Don't come empty-handed! Here is what you need to bring:

- Interview details including the address, phone number, and interviewer names.
- The original job posting to review while you're waiting.
- Additional copies of your resume and cover letter.
- A pen and paper for taking notes.
- Your portfolio and samples of your work, when applicable.

- A list of prepared questions to ask at the end of your interview.
- Your references, neatly typed on a single sheet of paper.

# DURING THE INTERVIEW

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Just like a good story, you want to have a “hook,” a memorable and compelling piece that will capture the interviewer’s attention and keep them engaged. Your “hook” or in this case, your first impression, should spark the interviewer’s interest within minutes of your initial meeting. Comparatively speaking, if the interviewer(s) are interested in the first couple of paragraphs, they’re going to continue reading. Therefore, in the first couple of minutes, there are many different things you can do to make a confident first impression. Consider these valuable suggestions on body language, verbal communication skills, and interview etiquette:

- **Be punctual.**

Arrive for your interview 10-15 mins before your scheduled interview time. It’s important to show that you’re prepared. If you feel that you might be running late, be courteous and contact the interviewer to let them know; this will give them the opportunity to reschedule if it is more convenient.

- **Give a firm handshake.**

Introduce yourself with a solid handshake. Remember not to grip too hard or too soft. If your hands perspire when you’re nervous, be sure to keep a tissue on hand to absorb the moisture while you’re waiting to be introduced.

- **Be friendly, smile, and maintain eye contact.**

You’re not just concerned about making an impression on your interviewers; ensure that you are friendly to any individual you are in contact with from the moment you walk in the door to the moment you leave. Smiling will create a warm and positive impression, and maintaining eye contact will demonstrate your self-confidence, focus, and respect.

- **Be aware of your posture.**

Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor, hands on your lap, and your back against the chair. This open position will convey interest and engagement. Poor posture, such as slouching may come across as too casual, and may imply disinterest or even defensiveness. Avoid closed body language, such as crossing your arms or sitting angled away from your interviewer(s).

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# PROFESSIONAL IMAGE AND ATTIRE

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Your professional image and visual presentation weighs heavily on an employer's impression of you. It is important to note that different employers and environments will have differing expectations of formality when it comes to dress codes, for example, a construction company may be much more casual than a law office. As a general rule, focus on dressing one step above what they would wear to work. This may involve researching the company beforehand or asking the person who has called to schedule the interview what the dress code is. Use the images below to help you to prepare.

- Avoid any clothing that is too tight, revealing, or uncomfortable.
- Have polished, clean shoes and avoid shoes that may be difficult to walk in.
- Choose solid colours and subtle patterns, avoid distracting patterns or bright colours.
- Avoid noisy or distracting jewellery, watches, and heavy makeup.
- Make sure your clothes are clean, ironed, and not wrinkly.
- Ensure you are well-groomed by having clean and neat hair.
- Be aware of scent-free policies.

## FEMININE BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL



- **TOP:** Light coloured, collared blouse, tucked in
- **SUIT:** Typically two pieces in black, charcoal or navy
- **BOTTOMS:** Skirts are not shorter than two fingers above the knee with minimal slits, pants are wrinkle-free and fitted
- **ACCESSORIES:** Minimal and conservative jewellery can be worn, avoid anything that's dangling or distracting.
- **SHOES:** Matching, closed toe, polished shoes with a low to moderate heel
- **HAIR:** Clean & neat
- **MAKEUP:** Natural and conservative
- **HOSIERY** Wear black or neutral hosiery with a skirt
- **NAILS:** Neutral polished nails or none at all, avoid bold colours and remove if chipping

## FEMININE BUSINESS CASUAL



- **TOP:** Tailored shirts, blouses or sweaters with a conservative neckline
- **BOTTOMS:** Skirts are not shorter than two fingers above the knee with minimal slits, pants are wrinkle free and fitted. Khaki or other colours are appropriate
- **ACCESSORIES:** Several pieces of jewellery can be worn, avoid being flashy. Belt should match shoes
- **SHOES:** Matching, closed or opened toe, polished shoes with a low to moderate heel
- **HAIR:** Clean & neat
- **MAKEUP:** Natural and conservative
- **HOSIERY** Wear black or neutral hosiery with a skirt
- **NAILS:** Neutral polished nails or none at all, avoid bold colours and remove if chipping

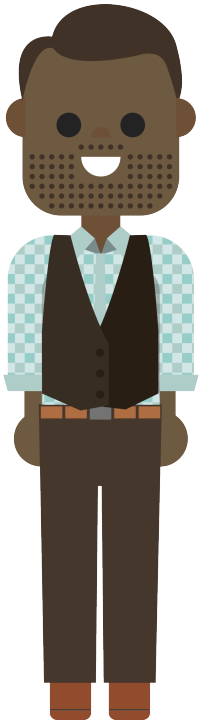


## MASCULINE BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL



- **TOP:** A solid coloured, button up dress shirt, tucked in
- **TIE:** Conservative pattern or solid colour, hang to belt line
- **SUIT:** Typically two to three piece suit in black, charcoal or navy
- **BOTTOMS:** Wrinkle free and fitted pants that break just above your shoe
- **SOCKS:** Dark colours that match attire
- **HAIR:** Clean & neat
- **FACIAL HAIR:** Neatly trimmed & well-groomed
- **ACCESSORIES:** A belt that matches the colour of your shoes
- **NAILS:** : Trimmed and clean
- **SHOES:** Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

## MASCULINE BUSINESS CASUAL



- **TOP:** Subtly coloured or patterned button up shirt, tucked in
- **TIE:** Optional, conservative pattern or solid colour, hang to belt line
- **BOTTOMS:** Dress pants, khaki or other coloured fitted pants
- **SOCKS:** Colours that match attire
- **HAIR:** Clean & neat
- **FACIAL HAIR:** Neatly trimmed & well-groomed
- **ACCESSORIES:** A belt that matches the colour of your shoes
- **NAILS:** : Trimmed and clean
- **SHOES:** Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

## GENDER NEUTRAL BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL



- **TOPS:** Sweater, subtly coloured or patterned collared shirt, tucked in
- **SUIT:** Typically two to three piece suit in black, charcoal or navy
- **BOTTOMS:** Wrinkle free and fitted pants that break just above your shoe
- **HAIR:** Clean & neat
- **MAKEUP:** Natural and conservative
- **FACIAL HAIR:** Neatly trimmed & well-groomed
- **ACCESSORIES:** A belt that matches the colour of your shoes
- **SOCKS:** Colours that match attire
- **NAILS:** : Trimmed and clean
- **SHOES:** Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

## GENDER NEUTRAL BUSINESS CASUAL



- **TOPS:** Sweater, sweater vest, subtly coloured or patterned button up shirt, tucked in
- **BOTTOMS:** Dress pants, khaki or other coloured fitted pants
- **HAIR:** Clean & neat
- **MAKEUP:** Natural and conservative
- **FACIAL HAIR:** Neatly trimmed & well-groomed
- **ACCESSORIES:** A belt that matches the colour of your shoes
- **SOCKS:** Colours that match attire
- **NAILS:** : Trimmed and clean
- **SHOES:** Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

# TYPES OF QUESTIONS

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Preparation is essential for a successful interview! You want to ensure that you are able to convey to the employer that you are the most suitable candidate for the position. You are the interviewer's main source of information concerning your qualifications. Do not assume that the interviewer knows all of your qualifications and accomplishments; you must clearly spell them out as you answer the questions during an interview.

## Introductory Questions

Introductory questions give you an opportunity to describe yourself and your accomplishments as they pertain to the job you are applying for. These questions are used to assess your background, your experience, and your organizational fit. Being that they are open-ended questions, they give you an opportunity to sell yourself.

Examples of common introductory questions include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- How has your education prepared you for this role?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why are you interested in working for our company?
- What experience do you have that relates to this position?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

## Behavioural questions

Behavioural questions will ask you to describe a specific situation or experience and require you to provide an example of how you handled it in the past. Behavioural interviews are founded on the idea that the best predictor of future behaviour is based on evaluating past behaviour. The key is not to get the "right" answer but to demonstrate how you came to an appropriate result. To

answer these questions well and completely, you need to be prepared with specific examples or experiences.

Examples of common behavioural questions include:

- Give an example of a situation where you had to deal with conflict, either with a customer or coworker. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation where a coworker or supervisor had expectations that you felt were unrealistic. How did you deal with that?
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- Describe a stressful situation at work and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you made a mistake? What did you learn from it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to balance multiple priorities.
- Provide a situation in which you managed a tight deadline?
- Give an example of a time when you collaborated as part of a team.
- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or coworkers.
- Tell me about a time you have gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?

#### The KEY to Answering Behavioural Questions, S.T.A.R. Technique

When answering behavioural questions, you should use the STAR technique to ensure you've included the appropriate amount of information and detail.

- **Situation** – Briefly describe the event or situation and include information on the who, what, where, and when.
- **Task** – Give a clear explanation of the task you had to complete and any challenges that accompanied it.
- **Action** – Speak about the actions you took to complete the task, purposefully mentioning qualities or traits that the interviewer is looking for.
- **Result** – In summary, emphasize what the result of your efforts was and quantify it when appropriate.

## Situational questions

Situational questions are focused on hypothetical scenarios and they require you to demonstrate sound judgment with a response or solution to a problem that you may not have experienced before. Sometimes these questions require you to think outside the box, and carefully consider what is really being asked.

Examples of situational questions include:

- If you discovered your supervisor was breaking the company's code of conduct, what would you do?
- As the team leader, you are faced with a situation where two team members are arguing, how would you deal with the situation?
- If you had two important deadlines coming up, how would you prioritize your tasks?

More unconventional questions an employer may ask:

- If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?
- If you had to sell this pen, what would you say?

## Job knowledge or technical questions

These questions typically assess the particular technical or professional skills and knowledge you will need to perform a job. Hands-on tests, simulations, and questions are phrased to find your level of experience with specific equipment, software, processes, procedures, etc.

Examples of technical questions include:

- What is the order of operations used when evaluating formulas in Excel?
- What are the key PivotTable "sections" into which users can drag columns?
- How do you properly use a blood pressure monitor?
- What is the process in which you enter an invoice into SAP?
- Show me how to wire these two three-way switches.

## Your turn! Questions to ask the employer

When an employer asks you at the end of the interview, “Do you have any questions for us?” you want to avoid saying, “no.” Having a lack of questions prepared may suggest to an employer that you’re uninterested in the opportunity. It is your responsibility to come up with some well thought out and engaging questions. The questions that you ask can be about the roles and responsibilities of the job, the organizational structure of the company, general interest, or the next steps in the hiring process. Be conscientious of the interviewer’s time, choose no more than three questions to ask.

Examples of questions you **SHOULD** ask include:

- What skills make the most successful employees here?
- What is the top priority of someone who accepts this job?
- Can you describe recent projects of someone in this position?
- What does a typical day/week look like in this role?
- How large is the team I would be working with?
- Is there any advice you can provide that would help me prepare for my first three months in this role?
- What is your favourite part about working for this organization?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?
- When should I expect to hear back?

Examples of questions you **SHOULD NOT** ask include:

- How much will I get paid? What is the salary? Is this negotiable?
- How many weeks’ vacations will I be entitled too?
- What does the benefits package include?
- How long until I can become a manager?
- Can I apply to other jobs once I’m working here?

# SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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## Question 1: Tell me about yourself.

This question is often used at the beginning of the interview as a way for the interviewers to get to know you. When answering this question, avoid being too general and don't go into irrelevant personal details. Use your resume to guide you in providing an outline for the employer to understand your work history. Focus on describing your related education, experience, personal traits, and emphasize your interest in this position or company.

### **Example answer:**

"I am in my final semester of the three-year Dental Hygiene Diploma program at Algonquin College. Throughout my program, I had the opportunity to complete a number of clinical placement hours in a dental clinic where I gained practical experience in providing various preventative oral health care procedures and patient education. Additionally, I have previously worked as a receptionist in a dental clinic and in a variety of customer service environments including Reitman's and Loblaws. I wanted to pursue this line of work because I have a passion for helping people live healthy lives. This has always been obvious in my previous work experiences, as I have often been regarded by my managers and colleagues as welcoming, approachable, and kind. I believe I bring many qualities to the table, for example, having successfully balanced my school schedule and maintained two part-time jobs, I know my time-management skills will be an added benefit to your team on a daily basis. I am excited for an opportunity to work with a family-oriented team that is committed to making a positive impact on their community through a number of preventative dental care initiatives."

## Question 2: What are your strengths?

This question tests your self-knowledge. The interviewer is looking for you to describe some of your core skills or traits that would make you an excellent candidate for this job. You should be able to clearly and directly identify your strengths as if you were a product that you were trying to sell to the employer. The best strategy is to speak confidently, and relate your strengths to the requirements of the job. Simply listing a number of qualities is not sufficient. Focus on identifying three strengths and add value to your responses



by expanding your answers and providing concrete examples from your work, school, or volunteer experiences.

**Example answer:**

“In all of my past jobs, I’ve always considered myself to have a strong work ethic. For example, I remember a situation that occurred during my Culinary Management field placement when I was working with a chef who had my team on a strict timeline. Unfortunately, there was some confusion and we did not receive a delivery of vegetables that we needed to prepare for an upcoming event. After calling the supplier, we learned that the shipment would arrive later on that evening, after the time in which everything should have been ready to go. Rather than go home, I volunteered to stay late and finish everything, ensuring that we would be prepared well before the event started.”

### Question 3: What are your greatest weaknesses?

We all have weaknesses, that is why an interviewer will ask you about yours to see if you have a realistic picture of your own limitations. In your response, discuss a weakness that doesn’t directly affect your ability to do the job you are applying for and then follow up by demonstrating what you are doing or have done to improve upon this weakness. A thoughtful response shows self-reflection and initiative in overcoming your weaknesses. Avoid overused clichés, such as “I work too hard” or “I am a perfectionist,” which come across as insincere and does not actually answer the question.

**Example answer:**

“When delivering presentations to large groups of people or speaking in front of crowds, I sometimes feel nervous and I have a hard time getting my words out. However, while completing my Diploma Program, I have taken many opportunities to voluntarily present information during my group projects, which involved speaking in front of 30-40 classmates. As a result, I feel more comfortable presenting, however, I know I need to continue to improve my skills further – this is why I have decided to attend a Toastmasters group once a week.”

### Question 4: Why should we hire you?

This question provides you the opportunity to give your sales pitch. Reiterate to the employer what benefits they can expect from you. It is your opportunity to show your

confidence and to highlight to an employer what specifically differentiates you from other candidates.

**Example answer:**

"I believe there are many reasons why you should hire me. For one, I meet the education and experience qualifications you are seeking for an individual to succeed in this role. I understand that there are likely other candidates that meet those criteria too, which is why I want you to know what sets me apart is my passion and commitment to motivate my team members to achieve their goals. For example, in my past work experiences, I have always exhibited a positive attitude and made it a point to lend a helping hand whenever opportunities presented themselves. My relationships with my team members have always been extremely collaborative and, as a result, we were more productive and efficient in completing our daily tasks."

## **Question: 5 Where do you see yourself in the next five years?**

This question is asked to address what your future goals or career aspirations are and how you intend to achieve them. Employers may also be looking to get a sense of your long-term commitment to their organization. Avoid speaking about unrelated ideas or ideas that would make the employer question your interest in working for them, such as mentioning your real goal is to start your own business or return to school full-time.

**Example answer:**

"In the next five years, I would like to become the very best Computer Programmer your company has on staff. I would like to take opportunities to learn and grow so that in the future, I become the expert that others rely on. My goal is to learn from the talented team of professionals at this company. In the long-term, I feel like this will prepare me to take on greater responsibilities as those opportunities present themselves."

## **Question 6: Tell me about a time when you experienced a conflict with a coworker/supervisor/manager. How did you handle it?**

This question is often asked to see how you are able to manage conflict and work cohesively as part of a team. The interviewers are seeking examples of real-life scenarios that have occurred and how you have handled them. Your ability to demonstrate appropriate problem-solving skills in resolving conflicts, while dealing with different personalities, will give the employer confidence that this is something you will be able to effectively deal with in the future. Avoid saying that you've never had a conflict or using negative language to

describe others in the situation. Your answer should not include relying on your manager to solve the problem – employers want to know that you are able to overcome small conflicts and move forward without interrupting the flow of the workplace.

**Situation:** “When I was working as an administrative assistant with a large accounting firm, the firm was experiencing some staffing changes and I was asked to support one of the other managers that I had not previously worked with. My previous manager had been very diligent in providing me feedback on my work so I knew what was expected of me. The new manager provided less feedback, which I was finding challenging. This caused a few disagreements as a result of not understanding what the other person wanted.”

**Task:** “I knew that I needed to clarify the manager’s expectations of me and identify how I could support him better.”

**Action:** “I suggested that we meet so that we could have more of a conversation about this. In the meeting, I acknowledged the disagreements and asked for specific feedback on what was and was not working. Being able to have an honest discussion regarding work styles and expectations led to a much better understanding on how we could work together more effectively. Listening and understanding each other’s point of view was helpful in coming up with a solution.”

**Result:** “After we had this conversation, we successfully worked together for several years. Since that experience, whenever I start a new job, I always take the opportunity at the beginning to discuss expectations.”

## Question 7: Tell me about a time when you experienced an angry customer. How did you handle it?

Similar to the previous question, this is often asked to see how you are able to appropriately manage conflict and use sound judgment when faced with difficult situations. Again, the interviewers are seeking examples of real life scenarios to demonstrate how you were able to think on your feet, find a solution, and maintain your professionalism. Avoid saying that you’ve never had this happen, but rather, relate it to a situation in which you exercised conflict resolution. Show how you took the initiative to implement a solution without having to escalate it to your manager.

### Example answer:

**Situation:** “When I was working as a sales associate at Walmart, a customer came in looking for a specific product that was currently on promotion. Due to the fact that it was a busy time of year, we did not have any of that product left in the store. The client appeared agitated and verbalized her frustrations towards me and several other employees.”

**Task:** “I knew that I had to calm the customer down and find out what I could do to help.”

**Action:** “I took the customer aside, listened to her concerns, validated her frustrations, and apologized for the inconvenience. Through our conversation, the customer disclosed that finding transportation was very challenging for her and she was upset because she knew she wouldn’t be able to get to another store to purchase this product. I then presented a solution by calling other stores to locate the product and offered to have the product delivered straight to her house the following day.”

**Result:** “As a result, the customer felt understood and made sure to tell me how much she appreciated my efforts, despite her initial concerns. Later on that day, my manager pulled me aside to recognize my excellent interpersonal skills and my ability to handle a difficult situation with such professionalism.”

## Question 8: What is your target salary? What do you feel this position should pay?

In this question, the employer could be interested to see if you have a realistic expectation of your salary based on your skills and experiences. They may also be evaluating whether or not your expectation fits within what the company can realistically offer you. Make sure to conduct your own research and show your flexibility by providing a salary range rather than a concrete number. You can research this information ahead of your interview using the following resources:

- [Government of Canada Job Bank](#)
- [Payscale.com](#)

### Example Answer:

“In my research, I have seen salaries ranging from \$42,000-\$46,000 based on positions requiring my level of education and experience. However, I am very flexible to discuss the salary that you had in mind for this position.”



The interviewers are seeking examples of real life scenarios that have occurred and how you have handled them.

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# UNLAWFUL QUESTIONS

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The Law in Ontario prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of: age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing only), record of offences (in employment only), sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation. The Ontario Human Rights Commission protects job seekers against unlawful questions. For more information, check out: [Ontario Humans Right Commission](#)

Employers' questions must be related to the job for which you are applying. However, use your discretion when answering, as questions could be asked unintentionally.

- Here is how you might respond if asked an inappropriate question:
- Ask the interviewer to clarify the meaning of the question.
- Ask the interviewer in what circumstances does the question apply to the job.
- Politely decline to answer.

# AFTER THE INTERVIEW

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You made it through the interview! You're almost at the finish line, but before you decide to congratulate yourself with a big delicious meal or night out, follow these three valuable steps to leave a lasting impression.

- **Evaluate and reflect.**

After the interview, it is a good idea to reflect on your performance and consider what questions you answered well and what questions could have used more information or preparation. A best practice is also to write down the questions that were asked so that you can prepare better for next time.

- **Ask for feedback.**

If you were not the chosen candidate, don't sweat it! Look at your experience as a practice round, and take the opportunity to ask the employer for feedback on your interview. You may find that not all employers will provide you with this specific information or that the response you receive is vague. However, if you do receive feedback, this information could be very valuable in increasing your chances of successfully passing your next interview.

- **Send a thank you letter.**

After your interview, differentiate yourself by showing your appreciation and reiterate to the employer your interest in the position by sending a thank you letter in an email format to those who took the time to interview you. Your thank you letter should be sent within a 24 hour period of when the interview was held. If you have agreed to provide additional information or samples of your work, be sure to do this as soon after the interview as possible. Remember to always proofread your email to ensure there are no spelling or grammatical errors!

# THANK YOU LETTER SAMPLE

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Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, (if multiple, list all the interviewers' names)

Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss the \_\_\_\_\_ position with your company. I really appreciate the time you took to get to know me and hear about my skills, experiences, and qualifications.

After speaking with you (or the interview panel), I am confident that I would be an ideal candidate for this role, offering the quick learning and adaptability that is needed to succeed with your diverse clientele. In addition to my enthusiasm and strong work ethic, I would bring the technical and analytical skills necessary to get the job done.

I am very interested in working with your talented team and I look forward to hearing from you once the final decisions are made. Please feel free to contact me at any time. If you require any further information, I can be reached at (613) 727-4723.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

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[Download Thank You Letter Sample](#)

# MOCK INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

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CRITERIA	YES	NO
<b>Image and Appearance</b>		
Shows up on time for interview		
Offers a solid and confident handshake when appropriate		
Presents as well groomed, has good hygiene, and dresses appropriately		
Smiles and speaks clearly		
<b>Body Language</b>		
Displays good posture and avoids unnecessary movements		
Demonstrates receptiveness (arms are not crossed)		
Demonstrates enthusiasm and interest, shows facial expression		
Shows confidence and maintains eye contact		
Is relaxed and maintains poise		
<b>Key Interview Content</b>		
Responds with concise, organized, and well thought-out answers		
Uses the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format to answer behavioural (example-based) questions		
Uses proper grammar and appropriate vocabulary		
Demonstrates research and understanding of the company and position		
Communicates program-related skills and indicates strengths		
<b>Closing Interview</b>		
Asks relevant questions to interviewer		
Thanks interviewer and identifies next steps		

### After the Interview

Sends thank you email after the interview		
<b>Feedback/Comments</b>		

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[Download Mock Interview Checklist](#)

# CHAPTER 5: CAREER MANAGEMENT: RETAIN, GAIN & MAINTAIN

In this chapter, YOU will:

- Understand the major benefits of retaining employment.
- Learn the necessary strategies to help you remain employed.
- Assess areas in which you can improve on in order to increase your job retention.

# CAREER MANAGEMENT

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All of your hard work has finally paid off and you've successfully landed yourself a job! Take some time to bask in the glory of this amazing accomplishment and be proud. You're standing on the edge of something great, but there's one last piece to this job search puzzle left. Buckle down, be proactive, and figure out what you need to do in order to increase your chances of keeping this job. The art of finding a job is just as vital to your long-term career success as being able to remain in a job. Remember that maintaining your professional impression doesn't stop after passing an interview and accepting a job offer, it becomes a regular expectation of you in your everyday professional life. Being able to keep a job does not mean that you will be in the same job for the rest of your life (this isn't even a realistic option anymore); it simply means that you have the knowledge and skills that will help you to remain in a job until your next opportunity comes around!

## Benefits of Retaining Work

There are tremendous benefits associated with being able to keep a job. Take a minute to reflect on some of the reasons and let them be a driving force for your motivation in maintaining employment.

- **Financial security:** The most obvious benefit of maintaining your employment is bringing home a regular pay cheque. Being financially secure can have a direct impact on you, your family, and your surroundings; therefore, when you have a steady income your risk of financial stress significantly decreases. Financial security also gives you the freedom to enjoy activities outside of work that may add to your overall fulfillment.
- **Confidence and purpose:** Knowing how to do your job and being able to perform it well increases your confidence in your own skills and abilities. For many of us, our work identities give us purpose, which is why contributing your skills to a greater team, teaching others, and using your strengths will make you feel proud of what you are able to do. When you lose your job or leave your job, a large part of your purpose and sense of accomplishment will go with it.
- **Skills development and career advancement:** The longer you remain at a company, the more opportunities you will have for skills development or additional training. Similarly, if

you have invested time into your employer, your employer is more likely to invest time into you. Showing your loyalty and hard work over a period of time will often result in promotions or opportunities for growth.

- **References:** Putting in your time at a company, and making a lasting impression on your employer, is important in today's job market when jobs are becoming more and more short-term. If you've maintained good rapport and shown your commitment in your role and to the company, it's much more likely that you will have a glowing reference from your employer. Having known you longer, the employer can also speak more directly to your on-the-job skills and is more likely to reference positive workplace examples.

# JOB RETENTION STRATEGIES

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Here are some strategies that you can employ to manage your career longevity more successfully. These suggestions are helpful for employment success, but also for successfully completing placements or maintaining volunteer opportunities. Mostly, they are very practical tips to survive your day-to-day professional life; these can be applied three days, three months, or three years into a job. You'll notice after each strategy there are one or two questions. If you've had trouble keeping a job in the past, answering these questions honestly may help you identify areas that you could improve on.

## Be Punctual and Courteous

Consistently showing up for work and showing up on time indicates that you're serious about your job. It's not only important to be punctual about arriving to work, but also to be on time for meetings and following the prescribed times for breaks or other scheduled work gatherings. If you know you are going to be late, be courteous: pick up the phone or send an email and let your employer know when you will be there (always offer to reschedule if that is more convenient for others). When you are able to meet your commitments, it tells an employer that they can depend on you.

- Are you often late for work, meetings, or do you take longer breaks?
- Do you generally take a lot of sick days?

## Be Presentable and Dress Appropriately.

Always maintain a level of professionalism through your work attire and visual presentation. Take note of the workplace dress code; until you have a better idea of what it is, take a conservative and simple approach to dressing. Even if your workplace is more casual in nature, it is important to come to work clean, neat, and well-groomed. If you are representing yourself professionally, you are helping the employer to be seen in a professional light as well.

- Do you take time to prepare yourself before work (hygiene, grooming)?
- Are you able to identify work-appropriate clothing in your wardrobe?

## Demonstrate a Positive Attitude

You may have experienced working with someone negative in the past, which is why it's so important for employers to want their employees to exhibit positivity. If you have a bad attitude this may impact how well you do your job or how you communicate with other people. People tend to remember the bad things; you certainly don't want your employer to remember you as the complainer. Positivity is a highly sought-after quality on the job, as it tends to be a morale booster and increase the enjoyment of a work environment significantly.

- Do you find it difficult to show enthusiasm about the work you're doing?
- Do you catch yourself complaining about things on the job?



Positivity is a highly sought-after quality on the job, as it tends to be a morale booster and increase the enjoyment of a work environment significantly.

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## Clarify Expectations and Ask for Feedback

Sometimes an employer may not have the time or resources to review your job expectations with you in detail. To ensure you're performing adequately at your new job, review your job duties very carefully, then identify your main responsibilities and how much time you should be spending on each. This is a fail-proof way to ensure you're on target with what your employer expects, however, if you are unclear of what this looks like, don't hesitate to clarify at any time. Along the same lines, if you want to make sure you're on the right track, set up a time to meet with your manager and ask for feedback on your progress so far.

- When you start a new job, can you clearly identify your roles and responsibilities?
- Do you wait to be told you're doing something wrong before asking for feedback?

## Ask for Help

Many of us make the mistake of wanting to prove we can do something on our own, or sometimes we're just scared to ask for help because we think it might be seen unfavourably by our managers. The opposite of this is true; employers want you to ask questions and ask for help when you're unsure of how to do something. Employers would rather you ask the questions you need in

order to do the job correctly, than potentially costing them time and money on careless, easily preventable mistakes. That being said, if you have a number of questions, collect them and schedule a time to meet with your manager to discuss them all at once – this will eliminate multiple interruptions.

- Are you reluctant to ask questions about tasks you are unsure of how to do?
- Do you feel comfortable approaching other colleagues or your supervisor for help?

## Develop Yourself Professionally

Be open to learning new things; employers are interested in having skilled and knowledgeable workers. By showing your commitment to continual learning, you're showing them that it is important for you to be able to do your job well, which reflects positively on the company. By training in something that makes you a subject matter expert, you will make yourself a more valuable asset to the team. Employers are often impressed when employees show an interest in growing their skills; from these ideas, concrete professional goals can be developed.

- Do you take advantage of professional development opportunities when they present themselves?
- In your previous jobs, have you taken the time to identify what you wanted to get out of your experience?

## Be Honest and Own Your Mistakes

It's not the end of the world if you make a mistake on the job, it just makes you human. The worst thing to do is to lie about it. If you take responsibility for your mistake and avoid making excuses, it will show a great deal of maturity. Employers will appreciate your honesty and your ability to handle a situation like this. If you show them you're willing to learn the proper way to do something, to avoid this happening again in the future, you will be more likely to build a trusting relationship.

- Are you scared to admit when you make a mistake, out of fear that you might get in trouble?

## Develop Positive Workplace Relationships

There are so many benefits to developing strong relationships among your team members. When you are able to get along with your colleagues, work gets done more effectively and efficiently. Don't get caught up in water cooler conversations or office gossip. Remember to show respect



to all members of your team, and listen attentively without interrupting. Your employer will be relieved when they don't have to spend their valuable time resolving petty interpersonal issues.

- Do you have strong relationships with the people you have worked with or gone to school with?

## Be Visible, Show Initiative, and Offer to Help

Take opportunities to volunteer for upcoming projects or committees. The more visible you are in the work activities you're taking part in, the more valuable you will be seen to your employer. Likewise, employers appreciate when employees offer to help and recognize when something needs to be done without having to tell them to do it. Look for opportunities to show your initiative by doing something you think may be helpful for the company, to improve a process, or to assist a colleague, and your employer is guaranteed to be impressed.

- Do you ever volunteer to be part of different opportunities that come up at work?
- Are you someone who recognizes when something needs to be done and does it without instruction?

## Follow Through on What You Say

Be a person of your word, if you can be relied on to do what you say you're going to do, an employer is eventually going to see you as their go-to person. When your words match your behaviours, it makes it easier for an employer to trust you and they will ultimately be more likely to recommend, praise, and invest in you. On the contrary, not actively following through on what you say can paint a negative picture of you to an employer; they may assume you are undependable or even uninterested in the job.

- Do you tend to follow through on your promises in your personal and professional life?

## Adapt to Change

With changes happening all around us, you're bound to experience a number of work-related changes in your time. Being flexible and open-minded to those changes will help to reduce the amount of stress you are experiencing and allow you to navigate unexpected changes in your work environment in a more positive and constructive way. Work changes can take their toll on morale, when employees are more adaptable, they will help set the tone for a more seamless transition across the team.

- Do you get flustered when faced with change?
- Is it hard for you to get back on track when things fail to go according to plan?

## Be a Problem Solver

Regardless of the job, we can't escape day-to-day problems, whether they are personality differences between colleagues or roadblocks in our daily tasks or projects. What's important for an employer to see is how you're able to handle it when the situation is appropriate. An employer is seeking those that can manage conflict through effective negotiation and communication skills in a diplomatic, respectful, and calm manner. Furthermore, when you are able to manage unforeseen problems by identifying a plan and proposing possible solutions, you are taking this off the employer's plate and allowing them to spend their time managing more pertinent concerns. When an employer has to frequently intervene in these situations it can take away from how competently they view you in your role.

- Are you able to effectively manage conflict without calling in the assistance of your superior?

## Remember, It's a Small World

Oftentimes, we forget how small the city we live in is, or how intertwined the job market can be. A best practice is to avoid talking about any work-related issues with people outside of your closest family and friends, and even then, you should be cautious. Word can spread like wildfire and you wouldn't want to lose your job over hearsay. Refrain from complaining about work and posting negative work-related content on social media. Despite your privacy settings, you can't be sure that that information won't get back to your employers or colleagues.

### SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

If you have a personal problem impeding your ability to maintain employment such as; anger, substance abuse, child care, housing, transportation, or other more pressing issues:



- Reach out to Counselling Services to develop more effective coping strategies and identify community resources.  
[algonquincollege.com/counselling](http://algonquincollege.com/counselling)
- Make an appointment with the Employment Support Centre to discuss appropriate ways of discussing these issues with your supervisor.  
[algonquincollege.com/employment](http://algonquincollege.com/employment)
- Inform someone close to you and ensure you have a support network in place.

# CHAPTER 6: INTERNATIONAL JOB SEEKERS & JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES

## In this chapter, YOU will:

- Learn about cultural adjustment as an international student or job seeker.
- Understand what Canadian employers are looking for and the differences in the Canadian job search process.
- Identify ways of disclosing a disability including if, when, and how to disclose a disability.

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR JOB SEEKERS

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Are you an international student who is interested in finding employment while you study?  
Have you recently graduated from your program and are looking to continue residing in Canada and pursuing your career?

For an international student or job seeker, moving to a new country can be a very eye-opening and life-changing learning experience. You have the opportunity to immerse yourself in a new culture while also sharing your culture with those around you. With a continually increasing presence of international students attending Algonquin College each year, Canadian students gain a broader understanding of the world as a result. The social and cultural perspectives of international students enrich the post-secondary experiences of learners by promoting the diversification of thought. Furthermore, international students and job seekers bring a wealth of benefits to the Canadian job market as they inspire a heightened sense of intercultural awareness, open-mindedness, innovation, and more global perspectives.

Beyond the benefits mentioned above, adjusting to life in a new country can be quite challenging. Once you add studying and finding work on top of that, it's completely understandable that you may start to feel overwhelmed. As an international student or job seeker, it is essential to understand and adapt to the major differences in the Canadian job search process in order to be successful in pursuing, maintaining, and managing your career and employment success. In this section, you will gain a better understanding of cultural adjustment, common cultural differences in communication and behaviours, as well as what to expect in the Canadian workplace and job search process.

# UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARING FOR CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

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As you integrate into a new culture, it can be very disorienting; therefore, it is important to maintain awareness about how you are feeling. Given the complete change in environment and a total shift in cultural expectations, it is not uncommon for international students to experience some form of culture shock when they encounter unfamiliar conditions. If you are experiencing culture shock, you may experience a range of symptoms that can include boredom, homesickness, helplessness, and irritation. There are four phases of culture shock (Oberg, 1954), and each individual will experience these phases differently, as the process is not linear.

- **Honeymoon:** You feel very positive, you are satisfied with your decision and you are excited and fascinated by your new surroundings.
- **Frustration:** You become anxious or confused that there are so many differences and you feel as though you lack the understanding to deal with them. It is common to experience feelings of depression or even to withdraw from your surroundings, with the desire to return home where things are familiar.
- **Adjustment:** As your surroundings become more comfortable and expectations become clearer, you are more able to manage the changes and solve cultural problems; slowly you begin to appreciate the differences and incorporate them into your own beliefs. Adapting to a new culture does not mean you are losing your own culture.
- **Acceptance:** You are able to comfortably participate in the new culture, and you even feel a sense of belonging.

Although it is normal for an international student to experience culture shock, it is integral that you have the appropriate coping strategies to deal with it. To manage your symptoms, consider the following suggestions:

- Regularly keeping in touch with your family and friends back home
- Staying connected to your roots by having things in your space that remind you of home
- Interacting with other international students, sharing your experiences, and seeking their advice
- Becoming familiar with your surroundings, accepting the common norms and behaviours

- Connecting to the culture, making new friends and participating in Canadian cultural activities
- Taking care of your health by properly eating, exercising and getting enough sleep.
- Being patient with yourself, it will take some time to adjust



## **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

For support in managing your cultural adjustment, reach out to:

- International Education Centre  
[algonquincollege.com/international](https://algonquincollege.com/international)
- Counselling Services  
[algonquincollege.com/counselling](https://algonquincollege.com/counselling)

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT CANADIAN EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

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In addition to having a well-developed set of technical skills that are required to effectively perform your job, Canadian employers are looking more favourably at employees who can demonstrate a range of soft skills. Soft skills are skills that have been developed across your diverse life experiences and can include qualities such as communication, problem-solving, leadership, a positive attitude, adaptability, and teamwork. When an individual can effectively identify concrete examples of how they have demonstrated various soft skills through past experiences, an employer will see the candidate as more valuable and a greater long-term asset to the company.

# UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES IN THE CANADIAN JOB SEARCH PROCESS

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Across cultures, it is not unusual that there are considerable value-based differences with respect to an employer's expectations. Without gaining a better understanding of these values, differing behaviours, and cultural norms, you may find it confusing when interacting with employers in the Canadian job market. Even different workplaces, like different countries, have differing cultural norms and can vary from job to job. Explore the following concepts and recognize how these will impact you through the Canadian job search process.

## Career Planning

In cultures where a job is assigned to you, it is assumed that you will take it, there is less emphasis placed on identifying your career goals as your career is often decided for you. In Canadian culture, taking ownership of your own career decision-making, and demonstrating a high degree of self-awareness towards your short and long-term career ideas is expected.

## Job Search

In other cultures, job searching may be more reliant on your school, government, or family to assist you in finding work. You may identify with this scenario from your past experiences and feel that the responsibility falls more heavily on the people who are assisting you. In Canadian culture, the job search process is very independent; you are responsible for your own efforts and successes in finding a job. As detailed in Chapter 3, an effective job search in Canada means that you need to use a diverse variety of methods to find employment, including but not limited to networking, online job boards, and accessing help through the Employment Support Centre.

## Resume and Cover Letter

There are some significant differences in the information that is presented on resumes in Canada. Further to following the resume and cover letter templates provided in Chapter 2, here are some suggestions for you to consider when developing your resume:

- Do not list personal information such as nationality, marital status, gender, date of birth, religion, social insurance number, visa status, or a photo of yourself.



- Include your Canadian residence address (you do not need to list your international permanent address).
- Personalize your resume to reflect soft skills and accomplishments from paid and unpaid experiences, do not just provide a chronological account of your work experience.
- Include your international experience and education if it is related to the positions you are seeking.
- Emphasize any other languages that you speak in addition to English.
- Do not include primary-level education on your resume; secondary and post-secondary are appropriate depending on their relevance to the job.
- Do not display your education in a chart format – write out the titles of your diploma and degrees.
- Avoid copying a resume from the internet or a friend, or putting false information on a resume – employers will question you about your experiences so you need to be truthful.
- Include a customized cover letter, even if it is not requested.
- Have your documents triple-checked for syntax, grammar, and spelling errors.

## Interview and Workplace Expectations

During the interview process, a hiring committee is evaluating you based on several different factors. These factors typically include body language, attitude, behaviours, communication skills, visual presentation, and the content and articulation of your answers. Embracing Canadian cultural values and developing intercultural skills will help you to better navigate the interview process and adapt to the Canadian workplace. Consider the following ideas as a way to manage your own expectations and prepare yourself for success:

- **Dress, scent, and hygiene:** When preparing for an interview or starting a new job, it is imperative that you follow the appropriate dress code. Please refer to Chapter 4 to learn more about appropriate attire and don't be afraid to ask about the dress code prior to starting a job. Many workplaces have instituted a scent-free policy, meaning that you should not wear perfumes or strong-smelling products in the workplace. In preparation for interacting in a professional environment, it is expected that you maintain your own personal hygiene, by regularly showering, wearing deodorant, grooming, wearing clean clothes, and having fresh breath.
- **Timeliness:** Being on time is a sign of respect in many cultures, including Canadian culture.

By arriving 5-15 minutes early you are showing an employer or individual that you understand that their time is valuable. Keep in mind, timeliness is more than just arriving early to work

or to a meeting; it's adapting to the pace at which you are expected to perform your tasks. This often varies by sector and organization and is something you will learn on the job.

- **Personal space, touch, and privacy:** Personal space is important to Canadians and refers to the distance between you and another person when you are interacting. Keeping an arm's length of space is seen as respectful; pay attention to what another person's body language is telling you. In some cultures, it may be appropriate to touch another person's arm or hold hands in a public space. Canadians may feel comfortable shaking hands at the onset of meeting, but don't usually touch while speaking to one another, especially in a business setting. Typically, Canadians are more private and less likely to talk about personal matters like family, income, or religion until they get to know you. Furthermore, respecting privacy in the workplace means discussing problems or concerns behind closed doors.
- **Assertive communication:** Many other cultures interpret eye contact and directness of responses with their superiors as disrespectful. In Canada, eye contact and directness typically translate into honesty, interest, and engagement and should be practised when interacting with all levels of individuals. At the end of the interview, the selection committee will expect that you have open-ended questions about the position and/or company. Where you may feel that this is imposing or rude, an employer will be impressed by well-thought-out questions and associate that with your interest in the company.
- **Self-marketing:** In Canadian culture, it is expected that you take a more direct and confident approach to openly highlighting your own strengths and accomplishments. Although this approach may make you feel like you are being boastful or bragging, it's actually seen as a needed strategy to sell your skills in a competitive job market. Similarly, it is expected that you take the initiative to follow up with an employer; you may feel that this is impolite, but it's actually seen as being responsible and could set you apart from other candidates.
- **Informality:** In other cultures, it may be considered inappropriate to sit with people who are considered to be of higher status than you. Questions or the informal exchange of information can be seen as disrespectful to the person's position. In Canadian culture, talking openly in an interview environment is encouraged. In this type of setting, you are expected to interact with your interviewer and share information. In an initial meeting, you may address a supervisor or manager more formally by using Mr. or Ms. before their name. This is respectful; however, it is appropriate to address them by their first name once a relationship has been established. Avoid calling them by their title, as they want to be seen as working with their teams and not above them.
- **Equality, power, and curiosity:** The Canadian workplace represents a wide degree of diversity as it stands; individual characteristics are not supposed to affect hiring processes or

on-the-job treatment. Therefore, respect is shown across race, gender, age, and position within the company. Diversity in the workplace also stimulates curiosity amongst coworkers; respond patiently when people ask you about your culture, don't assume they are ill-intentioned. Canadians are generally more accepting of differences and show interest in learning about another person's culture.

- **References:** It can be challenging if you don't have any Canadian experience and, as a result, are lacking Canadian references. However, if you do have references you can provide from your experience in your home country, feel free to offer them as long as they can communicate in English and are available to be contacted. When references reside out of country, it may be helpful to provide email addresses as a more convenient way for them to be contacted. If you are looking to gain Canadian references quickly, consider volunteering.

## Job Scams and Safety

Always be cautious. If a job is offered to you and it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. For more detail, refer to Chapter 3 to learn more about online job search safety. Most importantly, never give or accept money or provide anyone with personal information, such as your social insurance information before you start a job. Also note, it is not normal to be offered employment without going through an interview process first. If you have concerns about the offer you receive, contact the Employment Support Centre to discuss this in further detail.

# JOB SEARCH TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND JOB SEEKERS

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- **Gain Canadian experience and get involved.**

Obtaining Canadian experience shows an employer that you are able to acclimate into the local employment market. By including Canadian experience on your resume, you will be more competitive in the job market. Although a part-time job may offer you many benefits, experience can also be gained through summer jobs, volunteering, or joining extracurricular activities on and off-campus. Subsequently, you will learn more about workplace culture, practise your language skills, and build Canadian networks.

- **Understand your on- and off-campus work authorization.**

Not all employers will be familiar with study and work permits, as well as the restrictions you may have on where you are able to work and for how many hours. The more that you know and understand about this, the better you will be at explaining this to an employer and the more confident they will feel about the process of hiring you as an international student. For more information on the laws and regulations with regards to studying and working in Canada, please refer to the [Government of Canada website](#).



## SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

The International Education Centre is your home away from home during your time at Algonquin College. They are here to offer whatever support you need to adapt to your studies and life in Canada and connect with the college community and other students.

[algonquincollege.com/international](https://algonquincollege.com/international)

- **Practise and improve your language skills.**

One of the major challenges that arise in improving language skills among non-English speakers is confidence. When you are afraid of making mistakes or being judged, you may feel less inclined to speak. Take any opportunity to practise your language skills, interact with English speakers, learn by watching and listening to English television and radio programs, and spend time rehearsing your answers for interviews. Practising your language skills through mock interviews will help you to better articulate what you'd like to say, help you to feel more self-assured, and increase your chances of making a better first impression during your actual interviews.

- **Use accepted styles of job search documents.**

Refer to the resources in this book to help you develop job search documents that match the

content and formats that are expected among Canadian employers.

Be prepared to address assumptions about hiring international students. Oftentimes, employers are uneducated about the processes of hiring international students, which can lead to some common misconceptions. They may feel that the process is too complicated or time consuming, they may be concerned with issues surrounding work permits, or they may fear that an international student is not interested in staying on long term. Confidently addressing an employer's concern by providing them with more information and reassuring them of your commitment will help in the decision-making process.

- **Focus on networking.**

With such a large number of job postings not being advertised, it is imperative that you increase your visibility in the job market by expanding your personal contacts. As an international student, you may feel that you are at a disadvantage because your network in Canada is small. To build up your connections, consider volunteering, participating in career fairs and events, connecting with the Students' Association, and conducting informational interviews with employers.



### SERVICE SHOUT OUT!

Contact the Students' Association or visit their website for more information on joining clubs.

[algonquinsa.com](http://algonquinsa.com)

- **Showcase your diverse benefits.**

As an international student and job seeker, you bring a wealth of benefits to the Canadian job market. Focus on highlighting some of your unique qualities and market yourself with confidence when engaging with your networks and employers. Aside from the transferable skills you acquired from the experience you gained in your home country, you are multilingual, you are able to see things from different perspectives, you are sensitive to multicultural environments, and you have knowledge of international markets. On top of all that, you have demonstrated resilience and determination by adapting to and integrating into a new country.

- **Take advantage of services.**

There will be roadblocks along the way, but you don't have to go through this process alone; several on-campus services are accessible to you throughout your studies.

- **The Employment Support Centre** is your greatest resource to receiving one-on-one support for all of your career and employment-related needs as both a student and a graduate.

- **Be informed.**

When you don't know where to access all the information that you need, managing your life in a new country can be difficult. Knowledge is power; ensuring that you are informed and that you are being treated fairly and safely in the workplace is extremely important to your experience here in Canada. For more information, please refer to the following resources:

- [Employment Standards](#): Knowing what your rights and obligations are in the workplace
- [Health and Safety](#): Understanding your rights to feeling safe in the workplace
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission, Canadian Human Rights Act](#): Understanding that everyone will be treated equally and without discrimination

# STUDENTS OR JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES

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Are you a student or job seeker with a visible or invisible disability who is finding it challenging to find work? Are you feeling discouraged by the process and unsure about how to talk about your disability?

We already know that for anyone searching for work in today's competitive job market, finding a job can be a difficult and demanding task. For a person with a disability, the job search process may bring about other distinctive challenges. We also know that persons with disabilities are uniquely valuable to employers in several different ways and an increasing number of persons with disabilities are entering the workforce. When an employer chooses to hire a person with a disability they tap into underutilized talent, generate more diverse perspectives, create a workforce reflective of society, increase accessibility for all, and support the elimination of barriers.

In this section, you will learn practical suggestions on how to address your disability-related concerns throughout different intervals of the job search process. Let's ensure that your disability doesn't stand in the way of you getting a job and, in turn, focus on the immense value that you will bring to the workforce. Before you start your job search, consider the following strategies:

- **Evaluate yourself.**

It is important for you to start by evaluating your own feelings about this process. Reflect on the following exploratory questions and consider discussing them with a trusted source in order to work through your thoughts.

- Are you able to describe your disability to others, and do you feel comfortable talking openly about it?
- What limitations do you have and are you able to identify what accommodations you would need in the workplace?
- Are you comfortable educating your team members and answering questions about your disability and do you have additional resources you can provide to help them understand?

When you have a clearer picture of how you see your disability in the context of a work setting, you can start understanding what implications that might have on your daily life. Depending on your answers to the above questions, you are also able to start identifying what you need

to do

in order to better prepare yourself for transitioning more confidently into the workforce.

- **Educate others and challenge stereotypes.**

The more comfortable you are about your disability, the more comfortable the people around you will be. Advocate for yourself by educating others about your disability. When people are more educated about your needs, they are more likely to be understanding and less likely to make assumptions or feed into stereotypes. As a skilled and productive employee, you have the ability to change people's beliefs, and help them to see you as the hardworking, adaptable, and intelligent person that you are. This might be more challenging with some people than others, therefore, surround yourself with good support, and reach out to your Disabilities Counsellor at the Centre for Accessible Learning for further suggestions.

Furthermore, take matters into your own hands and recommend information or community resources that can provide them with further information.



### **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

Make an appointment with the Centre for Accessible Learning.  
[algonquincollege.com/cal](http://algonquincollege.com/cal)

- **Communicate effectively.**

Over the course of your work history, challenging situations will arise. As we previously mentioned, when people are uneducated about disabilities, they may not know how to ask questions or respond appropriately to matters concerning your disability. To navigate these situations effectively, you need to be able to communicate well. You should:

- Avoid reacting negatively to other people's behaviours, or assuming that someone is judging you, as your assumption might not be true.
- Promote disability awareness by taking opportunities to discuss your disability as a chance to teach others.
- Don't be afraid to articulate what your preferences are with regards to how you would like to be treated and what assistance you might need.
- Be open to discussing with your employer and colleagues how their comments affect you and suggest language that you prefer to be used when referring to your disability.





## **SERVICE SHOUT OUT!**

Check out the Job Seekers Guide for Students and Graduates with Disabilities for further support with your job search.

**[tlp-lpa.ca/career/job-seeker-disabilities](http://tlp-lpa.ca/career/job-seeker-disabilities)**

# DISCLOSURE

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In reference to your job search, “disclosure” is the act of making your disability known to others. You may be experiencing many different concerns or questions about the disclosure of your disability. If you don’t take the time to consider what disclosure might look like for you, it could have a direct impact on your self-confidence and the success of your job search. Remind yourself:

- **Disclosure is an important and personal choice.**

You get to call the shots when it comes to disclosure, the ball is always in your court for if, how, and when you would like to disclose. Don’t feel pressured by outside sources; make sure to make the decision that will be best suited to you.

- **Disclosure is not a one-size-fits-all concept.**

There is no one right way or right time to disclose your disability. When what, and how you disclose is entirely based on your individual circumstance and it will look completely different across every individual, employer, and job opportunity. Always use your discretion based on your current situation. Ask yourself the following questions to help you decide if disclosure is your best strategy:

- Is your disability visible or invisible? Do the risks of disclosing outweigh the benefits or vice versa?
- Will this information help or hurt your chances of getting and keeping a job?
- Do you need accommodations on the job? Without accommodations in the workplace is your safety at risk?
- Have you disclosed your disability in the past? What was the reaction you received? How did that make you feel?
- Do you think your employer will understand your disability? If not, are you prepared to explain it?
- Are you confident in reassuring an employer that your disability will not impact your ability to perform the job?

# PROS AND CONS OF HOW AND WHEN TO DISCLOSE

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Knowing when the best time is to talk about your disability can often be unclear; the chart below explains the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing at different times throughout the job search process. Identify what you would feel most comfortable with based on your individual circumstance.

When to disclose	Pros	Cons	Whne to use
Before an Interview	<p>The employer has already shown interest in you by scheduling an interview.</p> <p>If you need accommodations, the employer can be better prepared for the interview.</p>	<p>Employer may make inappropriate assumptions or stereotypes that may impact their decision to hire you.</p> <p>The employer may feel you were dishonest in your application.</p>	<p>Recommended if you require accommodations for your interview.</p>
During an Interview	<p>You can take the opportunity to highlight your skills and qualifications, positively address disability concerns and questions, and convince the employer of your ability to do the job.</p>	<p>The employer may react or feel you were dishonest. The employer may see the disability as a possible problem. You may not have the appropriate accommodations, making the interview more challenging or uncomfortable.</p>	<p>Recommended if your disability is not visible, but you are able to confidently focus on your skills and abilities.</p> <p>Be prepared to answer questions about your disability.</p>
At time of job offer	<p>If your disability doesn't affect your ability to do the job, the employer will be confident in their hiring decision.</p> <p>The employer can onboard you more appropriately.</p>	<p>The employer may react poorly or feel you should have told them before the hiring decision was made.</p>	<p>Recommended if your disability is invisible, and you don't require any accommodations. In this case, you could choose not to disclose your disability.</p>
After your start work	<p>You have the opportunity to prove yourself on the job first and respond to questions about your disability with employer and coworkers.</p>	<p>You may feel nervous or feel that you're being untruthful by not disclosing. The employer may react poorly or feel that you were dishonest. It may change your relationships at work</p>	<p>Recommended if not disclosing is causing you unnecessary stress or you need accommodations. It may also be appropriate if there are problems or concerns with your work performance or coworkers.</p>

<p>After a problem occurs</p>	<p>You have the opportunity to prove yourself on the job first.</p>	<p>The employer may react poorly or feel that you were dishonest. May perpetuate disability myths and misunderstanding among employer and coworkers.</p> <p>It may change your relationships at work.</p>	<p>Recommended if problems or concerns at work persist. Be prepared to educate your employer and coworkers about your disability. Ask for help and rely on your support system.</p>
<p>Never</p>	<p>You will not have to explain your disability.</p> <p>The employer and your coworkers may not automatically assume work related issues are associated with your disability.</p>	<p>The employer and your coworkers won't become more aware or educated about the benefits and value of hiring and working with persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Recommended if your disability is invisible, and you don't require any accommodations. In this case, you could choose not to disclose your disability.</p>

# DISCLOSURE TIPS

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If you're thinking of disclosing your disability, there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself. Read through the following suggestions and decide what is helpful for you:

- **Role-play your disclosure conversations.**

If you're nervous about discussing your disability, plan what you're going to say, and take the time to rehearse with a family member or close friend ahead of time. Not only will you feel more prepared about what you are going to say, you will also feel more confident. Keep it simple. You don't need to give all of your personal details, decide how much you feel comfortable with sharing and stick with that.

- **Don't present your disability as a weakness.**

Focus on what you can do for the company, don't let your disability stand in the way of highlighting your capabilities of performing a job. Focus on highlighting your skills and qualifications as they relate to the position. Give concrete examples of how you performed your job duties in the past, this will help the employer visualize you in the role. If you're comfortable, talk more about what kind of valuable contributions your disability has had in your previous environments.

- **Be able to identify your workplace accommodations.**

The more you can tell an employer about the required accommodations after disclosing a disability, the more confident they will feel in knowing how to support you. It will also be helpful to provide examples or reflect on academic or employment accommodations you've received in the past. If you have resources that you can provide to help the employer gain a better understanding of your needs, leave this information with them. Research the costs and funding available for any accommodations you may need. When possible, be responsible for your individual needs by providing the software or equipment needed for your accommodation. Sharing this information with the employer is helpful and creates a sense of reassurance that you are prepared for your new work environment and it doesn't provide an employer with an excuse not to hire you.

- **Be prepared to answer questions about your disability.**

Questions are an opportunity for an employer or colleague to learn. Providing an educated and thorough answer will be an opportunity to break down perceived barriers.

- **Talk about the business case for hiring persons with disabilities.**

There are strong motivations for businesses to hire employees with disabilities, which is why it is helpful to inform employers of the added benefits of adding a person with a disability to

their team. For example, they are diversifying their workforce, showing their commitment to employment equity, broadening perspectives, building a positive image in the community, widening their talent pool, and encouraging and improving accessibility practices for everyone.

# JOB SEARCH TIPS

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Spend time reflecting on the job search methods from Chapter 2 and 3, and then consider some of these additional strategies:

- **Maintain a positive attitude.**

There are many fears associated with entering and re-entering the workforce with a disability, especially if you're newly disabled or you've had previous negative experiences associated with your disability. If you are feeling negative about your disability or situation, this can come across in your behaviours and attitude. In the face of your challenges, do your best to maintain a positive outlook – this will be a strong indicator of your future career success. Staying focused on the skills you can offer and your past successes will help you look at your situation in a new and more productive way.

- **Seek out companies that support diverse hiring practices.**

Through networking, conducting informational interviews, working with disability employment support agencies, and researching companies directly, you can find out information about different organizations and their practices around the support of persons with disabilities. By targeting companies that are committed to building a diverse workforce, and who adhere to employment equity practices, you will be more likely to receive the support and understanding you need to be successful in the workplace.

- Canada's Best Diversity Employers
- Employment Accessibility Resource Network
- Career Edge: – Paid experience-based internship program for graduates with disabilities

- **Be open-minded and create opportunities.**

There are many companies out there that haven't hired a person with a disability before. If this applies to a company that you really want to work for, don't be afraid to reach out. Suggest to an employer the possibility of a job trial so that you can showcase your skills and abilities on the job and they can evaluate your work performance before deciding to hire you. This also gives you the opportunity to decide if this opportunity will be the best fit for you.



- **Connect with employment-based disability service providers.**

Two heads are better than one! If you don't want to go through this process alone, enlist the help of a community service provider. Some service providers are disability-specific and can offer programs on job search support and can connect you with disability-friendly employers.

Research the following service providers to learn more about your eligibility and available support:

- Acclaim Ability
- Causeway Work Centre
- CVE Inc.
- Distinct Programmes Inc.
- March of Dimes
- Neil Squire Society
- Performance Plus Rehabilitative Care Inc.

- **Stay motivated.**

Job searching can take a long time. When you're in the midst of your search, it's easy to lose your initial hopefulness. You must maintain your motivation in order to keep up with your job search activities. Stay motivated by celebrating your successes, even if you haven't obtained employment; any opportunities you have had to discuss your skills with others is an achievement. Moreover, keep track of your efforts by documenting and reviewing all that you've accomplished; this will keep you on track and you will be able to evaluate whether or not there is anything more you can do.

- **Coordinate logistics.**

Ensure that you have made the appropriate arrangements for transportation, recurring medical appointments, and childcare. These may or may not be formal workplace accommodations, but they may be aspects of your life that are impacted by your disability and should be addressed prior to starting a job.

- **Identify a solid support network. It's not always easy out there.**

To help you maintain your enthusiasm, identify people in your life whom you can rely on for encouragement, support, and sound advice. Network with other job seekers and other

persons with disabilities who have been successful in finding work. Find ways to support your networks and they will find ways to support you.

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## Acknowledgements

- Career Professionals of Canada
- Government of Alberta, Advanced Techniques for Work Search
- Government of Alberta, Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities, Tips for Job Seekers
- Government of Alberta, Job Smart Tips for Staying Employed
- Government of Canada, Competition Bureau
- Government of Canada, Job Bank
- Government of Canada, National Occupational Classification
- Government of Canada, Studying and Working in Canada
- Government of Ontario, Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act
- Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Guiding Principles for Experiential Learning
- Ontario Ministry of Labour, Health and Safety
- Global Affairs Canada, Cultural Information
- LinkedIn, LinkedIn for Students
- Nelson Education, Recruitment and Selection in Canada
- Ontario Human Rights Commission, Canadian Human Rights Act
- Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Essential Employability Skills
- Ontario Skills Passport, Essential Skills and Work Habits for Work, Learning and Life
- O\*Net OnLine
- Ottawa Police Service, Fraud
- Ryerson University, Career Compass: Your Career and Job Search Guide
- Simon Fraser University, Understanding Canadians

- Stanford University, Pursuing Meaningful Work: A Strategies Guide for Bachelor's & Master's Students
- Statistics Canada
- The Conference Board of Canada, Employability Skills
- The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), Career Readiness for the New College Graduate
- University of Manitoba, Career Development Centre, Working in Canada: A Guide for International Students
- Valerie G. Ward Consulting, Employment Readiness Scale