VOCATIONAL MANUAL

HELPING VETERANS WITH SPECIAL CONCERNS ENTER THE WORKFORCE

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

south central mirecc
Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center

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V.6.3
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As employment strategies are ever changing, the authors of this manual invite any comments related to additions, changes, or modifications. These will be incorporated into future editions. Comments can be sent to:

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The job search process can be, and often is, a stressful experience especially if you have a history of felonies. Concern over rejection, fear of new experiences, feeling unqualified, and explaining your history are just some of the feelings that can occur. If you have a felony, there is no way around it, you are going to have to look harder and smarter than most other applicants. This does not mean that you will not find a job; on the contrary, if you use the techniques in this manual, you will have a very good chance. It does mean that you will encounter more prejudice, rejection, and frustration than others. Is it worth it? The answer is undoubtedly yes. Those who find work and keep their job are far less likely to be rearrested, violate parole, relapse to drugs, experience depression, or become homeless. So, ask yourself, if you want to avoid any of those things, shouldn't employment should be a top priority in your life?

This manual will take you step by step through a process of identifying your interests, naming your weaknesses, and exploring options. The handbook, along with the job readiness classes and resume/interviewing vocational lab computer programs will move you from feeling unprepared to having a successful product you can sell – Yourself.

If you think about it, trying to find a full-time job IS a full-time job. You have to create a resume, find where the jobs are, get applications, fill out applications, turn in applications and resumes, and make follow-up calls even before you are interviewed. Then, after you have gotten an interview, you must find out about the job, find out about the company, decide what to tell, and decide how to answer the tough questions.
There are 4 basic truths to getting employed:

There are 4 basic truths to getting employed:

1) You will not get hired for every job you apply

2) The more you apply, the more chances you have of being hired

3) The better you are prepared, the better your chances of being hired

4) **GETTING HIRED IS A NUMBERS GAME.**

THE NUMBERS GAME

Getting hired is a numbers game. There is no way around it. Every time you apply for a job you have some chance of getting the job. That chance may be high or it may be very low. One of the largest problems that face seekers is expecting to get hired without putting in A LOT of effort. Some people think that their experience is enough, that a positive attitude is enough, or that their work history is enough; they go into job searching expecting to be hired after only a few applications. Though this would be ideal, the numbers game works against it. Let's say you are applying for a job as an apartment maintenance worker. If there are 20 other people who apply for that job and the employer was going to pick an applicant out of a hat, you would have only a 5% chance of being selected – based on chance alone you would have to apply to at least 14 jobs to have at least a 50% chance of getting one call back (don't ask how it works, but it's right). That means if you would want to go on about 2-3 interviews a week, it would be recommended that you apply to at least 42 different places! Like we said, looking for work is a full-time job.

Now before you get discouraged, employers don't select people out of a hat. If you are prepared, provide a good application and resume, and target your application and resume for the specific job, your chances of getting an interview can go way up. However, if you say the wrong things on an application, apply for jobs that you are not qualified to get, don't sell yourself on your resume, and don't help the employer understand why they should interview you, then your chances can go way down. Once in the interview, you can dramatically improve or ruin your chances depending on how prepared you are. Also, some of the other applicants will make mistakes, be unprepared, be unqualified, or mess-up in some way improving your odds. You need to do better than them.

Now what does all this mean? There are two important things to take from this. The first is that your chances of getting a job are directly related to how well you search, apply, and interview. The second is that to increase the number of call-backs you must also look more.

INTRODUCTION

Using our earlier example, if your preparation and competition only give you a 5% chance on each job of getting an interview but you want about three interviews a week, you would need to apply to about 20 different places just to have a 50/50 chance of three or more interviews.

However, if you are better prepared and have a 20% chance of getting an interview, you would only need to apply to about eight places to have a 50/50 chance of getting about three or more interviews.

Now you may think that getting from 5% (one in twenty) to 20% (one out of the top five) may be hard, but think about it:

20 people apply for a job

3 will not have any skills to make them acceptable to an employer – **17 left.**
3 will mess up the application but leaving things blank or being messy – **14 left**
1 when called for the interview will already have taken another job - **13 left**
1 will show up late for the interview - **12 left**
3 when asked to tell the interview about themselves will talk about personal things while the rest will talk about skills for the job - **9 left**
2 when asked about problems in their past will say things like "I was using drugs at the time" or lie. You might say "I was having personal problems at the time and had to be let go. Those problems are past me now and would not effect this job" - **7 left**
2 will just say their skills but not tell anything about where the used these skills or how they learned the skills, making the employer wonder if they really can do the job - **5 left**

This manual will assist you in improving your odds and in finding a job you can enjoy.
In this workbook you will:

- Work on describing what you have done, what you can do, and what skills you have.
- Identify professions in which you would like to work.
- Identify problems that may keep you from getting employed and learn ways to handle these problems.
- Identify and develop answers to the 'tough' interview questions.

This manual is designed to be worked by itself or as part of a job readiness class. The more you put into its content and the more effort you put into preparation for your job search, the better your chances. Remember, **getting hired is a numbers game**. Do what you can to improve your odds.

HARD TRUTHS

HARD TRUTHS

Overall, and there is no easy way to say it, having a criminal record can affect you obtaining and keeping the jobs you want. There are several reasons for this. These reasons include the way some people look at those with a felony history, legal restrictions, and ways you may interact with employers. Because of these factors, individuals with legal histories must work harder to find the jobs they want. The jobs are there, and there are employers who are willing to hire you, but you must commit to putting in the time to find them. This is not meant to scare you, but to remind you that you must stay focused on finding employment, search in the smartest ways possible, know how to describe your legal history to an employer, and sell your skills to get the job.

To start helping we will talk a bit about some of the barriers you will face.

Some jobs are not available for those with legal histories.

Many times, there are specific laws that keep someone with a criminal record from getting certain types of jobs. For example, school bus drivers may not be able to have an intoxicated driving conviction. Restrictions on working in child care or working with the elderly may exist. Working in private security may be restricted by past legal difficulties. Each state has different rules and restrictions, so it is important that you do your research.

There are several ways you can find out which types of jobs have legal restrictions.

The first is on the internet. Go to a search browser (such as Google) and type "legal restrictions about hiring felons in {whatever your state is}". You may need to dig a bit, but information is there.

Another way to find out about legal restrictions is to call employers. First develop a list of employers who do the types of work you want to pursue in your state. Call those employers and ask to talk to the person who is responsible for hiring and interviewing employees. This might be the manager or a human resource department. State to them, "I am looking for opportunities to do {whatever the job you are interested in}. I have been incarcerated in the past and want to know if I'm legally eligible to get a job doing {whatever the job you are interested in}." You may get some strange responses but call several employers and ask this question.

To help you with your job interest, list the top 5 types of jobs you plan to target in your job search and then mark whether you "know" you are eligible, or you are "unsure" if you are eligible:

List your top 5 jobs:

1. _____ Know Unsure
2. _____ Know Unsure
3. _____ Know Unsure
4. _____ Know Unsure
5. _____ Know Unsure

Now for those that you are unsure of, do the research on these to find out if you are eligible. This step is extremely important. The rest of this manual will focus on developing how to get the job you want; therefore, you do not want to waste your efforts if it cannot happen.

Employers have biases about hiring those with legal convictions.

Yes, some employers will not hire those with legal convictions. It is true. They may view those with legal convictions as a risk they do not want to take. They may wrongly view the person as less trustworthy or more likely to have future problems. The crime that is committed can also have an impact. For example, a person who has stolen money from an employer in the past may have a hard time finding future employment where they will be handling money.

Employers concerns may be somewhat understandable but being concerned to the point of not considering someone with a legal history assumes that the employer has no one they currently employ that has ever committed a crime, used drugs, or made mistakes.

However, no matter how unfair, it is a barrier.

One of the things that is very difficult to do is to change other's attitudes and opinions, and that is especially difficult to do in a short interview. You may not be able to change the employer's ideas about everyone with legal histories. But you can change his opinion about YOU!

Though it is a barrier, recent research with employers has shown that although employers have concerns about those with legal convictions, they do evaluate everyone as a unique person. That means you can change the way the employer views you. The research shows that over 60% of employers are willing to hire someone with a felony conviction and more than 65% said they did not have actual policies against hiring someone with a legal history. **This shows the jobs are out there and obtainable.**

Several areas were important to employers when it came to talking to individuals with felony convictions including honesty and being able to talk about how their life has changed from the conviction.

But the main reasons employers will hire individuals with felony convictions are 1) they were qualified for the job, and 2) they had good interviewing skills. This manual will teach you how to show you are qualified as well as what to do in an interview – so you've got that covered.

Throughout this manual, pay special attention to developing the way you will sell yourself to an employer. Also, upcoming units will review some of the problems encountered while employed and how to address them in interviews.

UNIT ONE

UNIT ONE - WHAT DO YOU DO?

The priority is to identify what kind of job-related skills you have been using in your past jobs. What you need to do is "unbundle" your job skills. That means break them down so when describing your work, you do not say "I drove a truck" but instead "I drove 4 different types of trucks, kept mileage and delivery logs, and counted inventory on shipments". Below please list 5 jobs you have had in the past – not where you worked- but the title of your position and what you did.

GOAL: Identify what kind of work you have done and how you would describe it. Also, identify what kinds of work you think about doing and what kind of personal interests you have.

1. Occupation _____

List three things you did at that job

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

2. Occupation _____

List three things you did at that job

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

3. Occupation _____

List three things you did at that job

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

4. Occupation _____

List three things you did at that job

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

5. Occupation _____

List three things you did at that job

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

Next, list 5 jobs you would like to have in the future

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Finally, list 5 things you like to do for fun

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

UNIT TWO

UNIT TWO - OLD JOBS

Now we will focus on problems and successes that have occurred at past jobs. It is important to be as honest as you can, so the most important problem areas can be identified.

PROBLEM AREAS

Goal: Identify negative things that have happened at past jobs. This will help you identify problem areas that may keep you from sustaining employment as well as things you may need to discuss when attempting to attain employment.

In the last 10 years, from how many jobs have you been fired? _____

Please list the reasons you were fired (examples: absenteeism, tardiness, poor job performance, aggressive behavior on the job, or others).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In the last 10 years, how many jobs did you quit? _____

Please list the reasons you quit (examples: conflict with boss or coworkers, boredom, knew going to get fired, better jobs, moved from the area, or others).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now look back over the problem areas. These are going to be danger areas for your next job. Always keep these things in mind when you are looking for a job. Ask yourself, can I avoid these problems, does this job put me at risk for doing them again, and have I changed? Consider carefully the risk of putting yourself right back in a situation that is the same one you were in if you have not done anything to improve the situation.

POSITIVE AREAS

Goal: Identify positive things to tell potential employers on an interview, resume, or application and identify for yourself successes and strengths.

Please list 5 things you did very well at your jobs in the past. These will be used later in describing your skills and interviews.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

UNIT TWO - OLD JOBS

Please write down 3 examples of where you were successful at work. These can be times you went above and beyond the call of duty, were singled out by your boss for a good job, received recognition, or didn't miss work a large number of days in a row; any 3 examples of being a good employee. These will be used later in describing your skills during interviews.

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

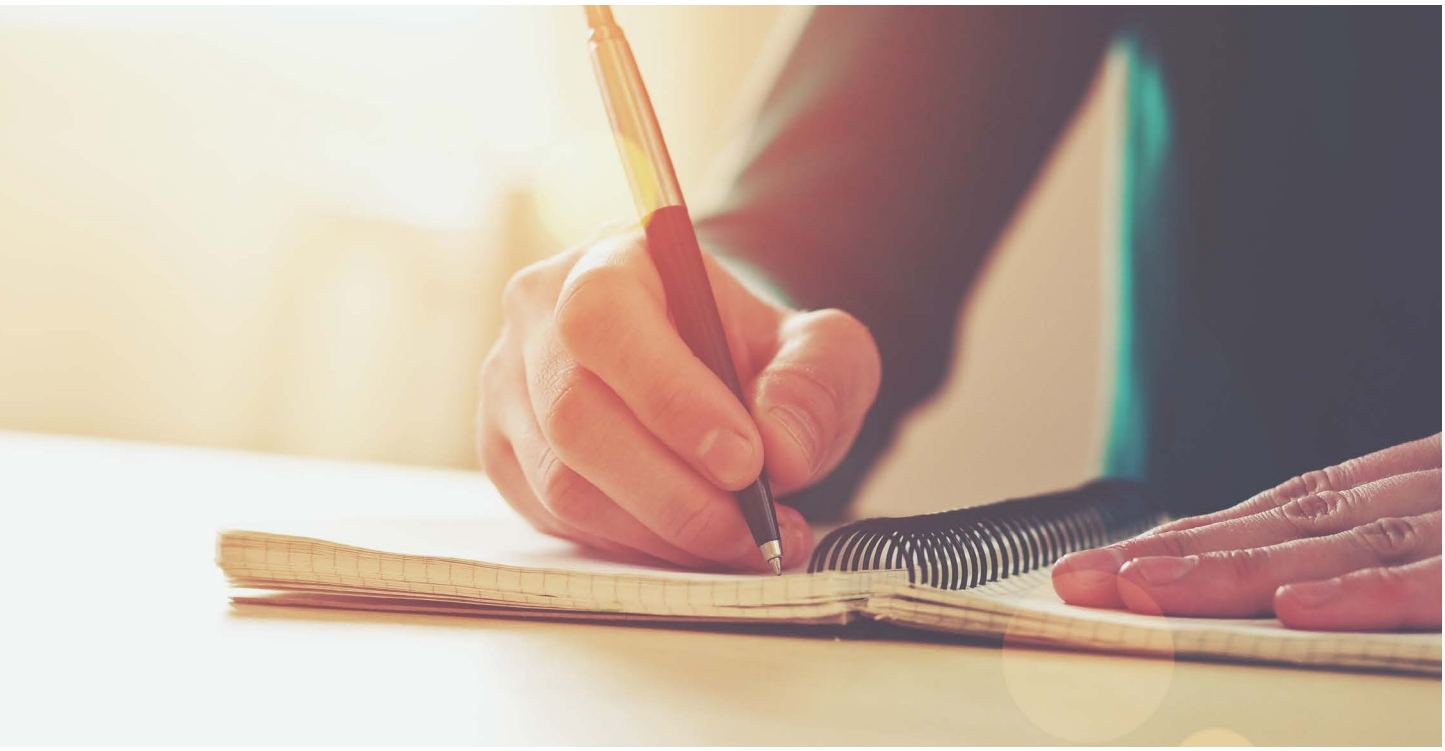
_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____



UNIT THREE

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Goals: Identify your skills and have examples for each one.

Believe it or not there is only one thing that will get you hired most of the time – **SKILLS**. Skills are the only reason that an employer wants to speak with you. Usually they don't really care about where you were born, what your hobbies are, or whether you follow sports. They may ask about that, but these are not the things that will get you considered for a job. The employer is only interested in hiring you for one or two reasons: either to **Get A Job Done** and/or to **Make Them Money**! There is no other reason that an employer is looking to fill a position. You may be the most well-traveled person, can tell great stories, and know all about classical jazz, but if these things you talk about do not make an employer money, you are not going to get the job! Period!

The only thing the employer cares about is your skills. Of course, you will hear someone say, "I went in there and saw that the employer had pictures of him/her fishing and so I spent the entire time talking about fishing. After that the employer hired me." Do not let these few times convince you to try this. You are there to sell your skills, nothing else. The fact that you fish may be a bonus but that is not why the employer wants to see you.

Handling your felony: As you know, you are not your felony. However, when an employer hears you have a felony, he or she will make some assumptions. These assumptions include 'dishonest,' 'lazy,' 'dangerous,' or 'unsafe.' It will be your job during the application process to convince them otherwise. You will need to keep him or her focused on your skills, what you have done in the work field, what you can do, and how you will make them money. The felony can be drowned out by focusing on your skills, but you must sell them! If the only examples of using an important skill are while incarcerated, go ahead and talk about it but avoid saying things like 'while incarcerated' or 'while on the inside' or 'before I got back to the world.'

Job-Related Skills

There are three basic types of skills that are related to obtaining employment. These skills form the backbone of determining which jobs to apply for, what to say on your resume, and how to describe yourself in the interview. Overall, these skills describe what you can do and what type of employee you will be. The first type of skills is the Job-Related skills. These skills describe specific abilities you have that allow you to do a particular job. For example, a warehouse person may know how to drive a fork-lift; an office manager may know how to use a fax machine; a car sales associate may know how to finance a car.

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

These skills are specific to the job and allows the employer to easily determine if you can do a job in the future. Often employers will use job related skills to screen applicants to determine who they will interview.

Assignment: You are now going to identify some of your job-related skills. Below, list the type of work you have done the most. DO NOT FORGET MILITARY EXPERIENCE.

Type of work you have done the **most:** _____

Now list the specific things you did at that job under the correct category (if none write 'none').

Machines/Tools you used (examples – forklifts, copiers, trucks, table saw, deep fryers):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Software you can use (examples – Word, Excel, MAS90, QuickBooks):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Policies and Procedures that you know about (examples – OSHA regulations; loading and unloading trucks; accounts payable; doing maintenance on vehicles; cooking food safely):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Type of work you have done the **second most:** _____

Now list the specific things you did at that job under the correct category (if none, write 'none').

Machines/Tools you used (examples – forklifts, copiers, trucks, table saw, deep fryers):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Software you can use (examples – Word, Excel, MAS90, QuickBooks):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Policies and Procedures that you know about (examples – OSHA regulations; loading and unloading trucks; accounts payable; doing maintenance on vehicles; cooking food safely):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Type of work you have done **third most**: _____

Now list the specific things you did at that job under the correct category (if none, write 'none').

Machines/Tools you used (examples – forklifts, copiers, trucks, table saw, deep fryers):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Software you can use (examples – Word, Excel, MAS90, QuickBooks):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Policies and Procedures that you know about (examples – OSHA regulations; loading and unloading trucks; accounts payable; doing maintenance on vehicles; cooking food safely):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

The skills you listed are examples of job-related skills. They can help you focus on types of employment. For example, if you identify your only skills as operating a forklift, loading and unloading trucks, and understanding how warehouses work; what is the type of work you will likely be looking for? The answer is Warehouseman. If you identify your only skills as using a copy machine and fax machine, able to operate phone systems, and you know medical billing codes; what is the work you will be looking for? The answer is some type of medical office worker.

One problem with these is that they can trap you into keeping the same type of job you had previously. Though staying with something you have done before can be very comfortable, it also is very limiting. For example, if you are looking for a medical office job you will get the newspaper and find all the medical office jobs. You will then apply to all of those and wait.

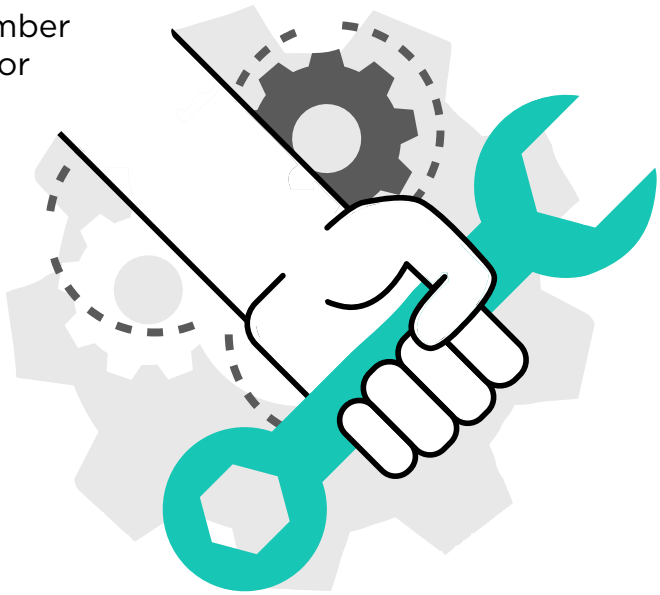
Every time a new medical office job shows up in the paper you will apply to it but that may not be every week. So, you spend a lot of time waiting for new opportunities to come around which results in wasted job search time and delays finding employment.

Overall, although job related skills are easy to remember, they are often the most limiting and the least important of the three types of skills.

Transferable Skills

The second major set of skills is the transferable skills. Transferable skills are those that can transfer from one job to another, though the setting for using this skill may be different. These skills are usually more general than the job-related skills. For example, a person may be able to operate a table saw, a drill press, and a router. Overall, however, he or she can say they have skills with hand tools. A person may be able to operate sit-down forklifts and cherry pickers. Overall, they can operate small machines. In the first case, the person is not saying he has operated all types of hand tools, but that he has the skills that would allow him to operate all types of hand tools. In the second example the person is not saying she has operated all types of small machines, but that she has the skills that would allow her to operate all types of small machines.

The transferable skills allow you to expand the number of jobs you apply to as well as the types of jobs. For example, if you have skills that include safety, good with hands and tools, and able to follow detailed instructions, what type of jobs would need these skills?



One type of job would be as a cook – even without specific professional cooking experience, someone who cooks must be good with their hands (knives, graters, spatulas), must have good attention to safety (knives, working close to others, risk of fire), and must be able to follow detailed instructions (recipes, food preparation).

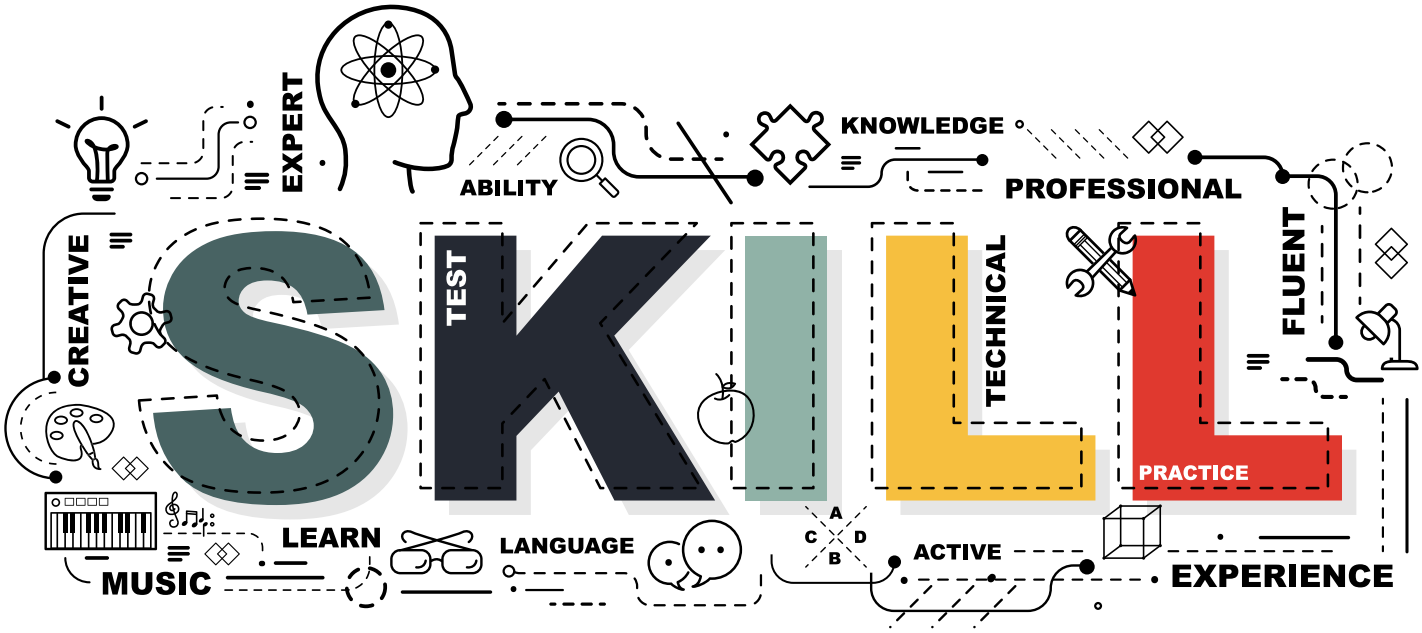
UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

A second type of job may be a carpenter. They must be good with their hands (hand tools, power tools). They must have attention to safety (working with sharp tools and in hazardous conditions) and must also be able to follow instructions closely (plans, measuring).

A third type of job may be a driver. They must be able to be good with hands (coordinating shifting and steering), must have attention to safety (driving on the road with others), and must be able to follow instructions closely (maps and directions).

A fourth type of job may be nursing assistant. They must be good with hands (doing blood pressure, giving pills, helping steady a patient), must have attention to safety (blood products and needles are present), and must be able to follow instructions closely (follow health care standards, individual patient care plans).

As can be seen, transferable skills can be used in a variety of different jobs. Look at the list below and put a check mark by the transferable skills you possess.



UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Transferable Skills

The following is a list of Transferable Skills. It is not every transferable skill, but it is a list of many common ones. Read through the list and put a check mark beside the one that best describes you.

Using hands/ Working with Objects

Assembling things _____
Building Things _____
Constructing things _____
Driving _____
Good with hands _____
Inspecting _____
Operating tools/machines _____
Operating vehicles _____
Repair things/buildings _____
Use machines _____

Data/Business

Accounting _____
Audit Records _____
Calculate _____
Check for accuracy _____
Classify things _____
Compare data _____
Evaluate data _____
File _____
Fill out forms _____
Investigate _____
Operate computers _____
Operate office machines _____
Record keeping _____
Forecasting _____
Creating ideas _____

Working with People

Caring for others _____
Comfort others _____
Counsel others _____
Demonstrate things _____
Interviewing _____
Listening _____
Mentoring _____
Organizing others _____
Persuasive _____
Planning _____
Problems solve _____
Public speaking _____
Running group discussions _____
Sharing credit _____
Supervise _____
Supporting others _____
Talking to people _____
Teaching _____
Write business letters _____
Write clearly _____

Academic

Strong math skills _____
Strong reading skills _____
Strong writing skills _____

Transferable Skills - Continued

Leadership

Arrange business/social events _____
Ask questions _____
Delegate _____
Make decisions _____
Motivate others _____
Negotiate _____
Run meetings _____
Sell things _____
Solve problems _____
Reporting Information _____
Cooperating _____
Selling ideas _____
Accepting Responsibility _____

Artistic

Act/perform _____
Artistic _____
Dance _____
Design _____
Draw _____
Music _____
Paint _____

Work Environment

Comfortable working under stress _____
Comfortable in high pressure environments _____
Comfortable meetings deadlines _____
Experience with hazardous materials _____
Operate computers _____
Operate medical equipment _____
Working Safely _____

Now pick your top 5 from the list and write them below.

Transferable Skill **#1** _____

Transferable Skill **#2** _____

Transferable Skill **#3** _____

Transferable Skill **#4** _____

Transferable Skill **#5** _____

Transferable Skills - Continued

Now having your top 5 transferable skills is good. This gives you ways to describe your skills. However, it is not enough to merely state your skills; many of the people applying for the same job may have similar skills. You need to give the employer specific examples of when you have used these skills. These examples need to be actual examples of times, specific events, duties, and responsibilities that you have performed.

There are several reasons for giving examples. The first is that this helps to elaborate about the skill and provide more detail. For example, if you say "I've worked as a cook," this is generally short and not very specific, versus if you say, "I worked as a cook for 3 years at Waffle House, where I was responsible for working with a group of 3 other cooks to assemble all meals, made sure that recipes were followed exactly, and prepared special orders" gives the employer more specific information about what you did. It brings in other skills such as attention to detail (following recipes exactly), responsibility (preparing special orders), and working with a team (group of 3 other cooks).

The second reason for giving examples is it allows the employer to see exactly what you did on the job. Sometimes when we say a skill – cooking – the employer may assume that means that you stood at a fryer punching a button and pulling out fried food; however, you could have been responsible for working closely with the wait staff, making sure all food was ready and well stocked, as well as cooking with all types of equipment including fryers, steamers, ovens, grills, griddles, smokers, and crockpots. This level of detail lets the employer see your range of skills.

The third reason is that employers are more likely to remember what you talked about the most. So, if you talk about your skills in one-word responses like "I can cook" and you spend 5 minutes talking about why you are not working now, what is the employer going to remember? They will remember the discussion about your work history. Giving good examples are more memorable and give you a better chance to get the job.

So, let us create some examples.

Assignment: Take your transferable skills from above and write them on the lines on the following page. Then come up with 2 proofs from your past that shows you using this skill. This can be on a job or in your private life but should always be something you have done. DO NOT describe how you would do something – focus on what you have actually done.

Transferable Skill **#1** _____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill **#2** _____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill **#3** _____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill **#4** _____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill **#5** _____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skills

Up until now we have talked about the skills you can do specifically to get a job done. But does an employer always hire the person with the best skills to get the job done? The answer, often surprisingly, is "No." Think about it. We have all worked with someone whose personality is really a problem. No one wants to be on the same shift with this person and when you must work with them you do not enjoy your job as much. If an employee does the best job but causes 5 other employees to do a bad job, is the employee good for the company?

The skills that make you good for the company and others are the Adaptive skills. Adaptive skills are the skills you have or parts of your personality that allow you to adapt to new jobs and work well with others. These can be skills such as 'helpful,' 'on time,' 'assertive,' and 'caring.'

These are extremely important to those with felony histories because employers often feel you will not have these. You must tell them you do. Be specific and give good examples. On the next page is a list of adaptive skills that could describe you. Check all that you have. Because many of us have not always been the employee we would have wanted to be because of mental or physical health problems, substance use, or family problems, check the ones that describe the kind of employee you are at your best.

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Adaptive Skills

The following is a list of Adaptive Skills. It is not every adaptive skill but is a list of many common ones. Read through the list and put a check mark beside the ones that describe you.

Ambitious	_____
Accept responsibility	_____
Active	_____
Adventurous	_____
Affectionate	_____
Ambitious	_____
Articulate	_____
Assertive	_____
Assistive	_____
Caring	_____
Charismatic	_____
Charming	_____
Cheerful	_____
Committed	_____
Compassionate	_____
Completes all assignments	_____
Confident	_____
Conscientious	_____
Considerate	_____
Creativity	_____
Dedicated	_____
Dependable	_____
Detail oriented	_____
Determined	_____
Distinctive	_____
Dynamic	_____
Easy going	_____
Efficient	_____

Empathetic	_____
Encouraging	_____
Energetic	_____
Enterprising	_____
Entertaining	_____
Enthusiastic	_____
Fair-minded	_____
Flexible	_____
Focused on results	_____
Follows instructions	_____
Friendly	_____
Gentle	_____
Genuine	_____
Gets things done	_____
Good-natured	_____
Happy	_____
Helpful	_____
Highly motivated	_____
Honest	_____
Humorous	_____
Imaginative	_____
Independent	_____
Insightful	_____
Intelligent	_____
Intuitive	_____
Inventive	_____
Knowledgeable	_____
Leadership	_____

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Likeable	_____
Logical	_____
Mature	_____
Objective	_____
Open-minded	_____
Optimistic	_____
Orderly	_____
Organized	_____
Original	_____
Outgoing	_____
Patient	_____
Perceptive	_____
Persistent	_____
Persuasive	_____
Precise	_____
Productive	_____
Professional	_____
Quick	_____
Rational	_____
Realistic	_____

Reassuring	_____
Receptive	_____
Responsive	_____
Self-confident	_____
Self-motivated	_____
Service-oriented	_____
Sincere	_____
Sociable	_____
Spontaneous	_____
Stimulating	_____
Strong	_____
Take responsibility	_____
Talented	_____
Thoughtful	_____
Tolerant	_____
Truthful	_____
Unique	_____
Willing to learn	_____
Work hard	_____

After you have identified your skills, pick your top 5 and write them below. We will be working with those later.

Adaptive Skill **#1** _____

Adaptive Skill **#2** _____

Adaptive Skill **#3** _____

Adaptive Skill **#4** _____

Adaptive Skill **#5** _____

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Just like transferable skills, examples of your adaptive skills are very important. These give the employer an idea of exactly what kind of employee you will be and show them that you have been that employee in the past. Examples of adaptive skills are sometimes harder to come up with because you cannot always point to a specific thing as an example. For example, it is easier to find examples of "*Good with my hands*" than it is to find examples of "*Friendly*."

Assignment: Take your adaptive skills from above and write them on the lines below. Then come up with 1 or 2 proofs from your past showing you using this skill. This can be on a job or in your private life but should always be something you have done. For example, if you pick Friendly, describe something like "on all my jobs I see my co-workers as my friends. I work to make sure we all get along and try to keep the team in a good mood. I try to keep up with how they are doing and try to help if something is bothering them."

Adaptive Skill **#1** _____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill **#2** _____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill **#3** _____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill **#4** _____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill **#5** _____

Proof _____

_____

UNIT THREE
WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

Skills Summary

In summary, it is critical that you know your skills and examples COLD. When someone asks you to tell them about yourself – talk about skills and give examples. When someone asks why they should hire you – talk about skills and give examples. When they ask what you did on your past job – talk about skills and give examples. You need to memorize your skills. If you don't, your chances of getting the job goes down.

UNIT FOUR

UNIT FOUR - JOB APPLICATIONS

Goal: Learn do's and don'ts of applications

Almost everyone has filled out an application. Though it may seem like this is an easy thing, there are a number of things you must remember:

- **Be neat**. If you make a mistake just cross it out with a single line and the write the correct answer. Do not do: ~~Dalas~~, Texas, just a single line, ~~Dalas~~, Texas

- **Fill out every blank**. If the answer does not apply to you, write "N/A" for 'not applicable.' This lets the employer know that you read the question. Blanks make employers wonder if the answer is no or if you are careless.

- **Keep a 'cheat sheet' for your applications**. You should have a summary page of all your experiences, dates, and important facts. You may be asked to fill out an application at the time of the interview even though you have already completed one before. The original application could have been lost or the interviewer may just not have it. If this happens both applications must MATCH – all information should be the same. A summary sheet is included at the end of this manual.

- **Be as honest as you can about dates and times**. If you lie on an application, you will be fired in the future. Period.

- **If the company no longer exists, still put it down**.

- **If you do not know the address of the company, try to find it before you start applying**. If you absolutely cannot find it, write "address unknown" in that space, but at least enter the city and state. Even though not ideal, it is better than leaving a space blank.

- **Make sure you get important job experiences on the application, even if this violates the application requests**. For example, you are applying for a warehouse job but have not had warehouse experience in 10 years, a job that lasted six years. During those 10 years, you have had seven jobs. The application only asks for your last five jobs. You need to include that warehouse job, so the employer knows you have experience.

- **Do not use the word "fired" on an application**. If you were fired, use the words "let go" – it is less harsh. Also, be prepared to explain this – you know the employer will ask, so be prepared!

- **Do not forget to sign your name, if applicable**.

- **Focus what you have done on your transferable, adaptive and job-related skills**. Make sure you use all three skills.

If you have legal problems, follow these steps.

1. If the application asks if you have been convicted of a felony, and you have, always check yes. Do not lie. If you check yes and the employer calls you, you know you can be hired with a felony and so all you have to do is explain it (addressed later in Unit Seven).
2. If the application asks if you have been convicted within a certain time frame, answer accurately. If the application asks if you have been convicted in the last five years but you were convicted five years and one month ago, and spent the last five years in prison, the answer is "no." Answer that way.
3. When asked to describe the felony, write "Will discuss." Though this does sound evasive, the charge you received my sound worse than the events. For example, a veteran was convicted of "Making terroristic threats." The actual events were that while in an argument with a neighbor, he waved a handgun. Though clearly not a good thing to do, in a post 9/11 America, "making terroristic threats" means something very different and would likely cost him the job before he was interviewed.
4. In your work history, if you have a gap due to incarceration either 1) accept it and if asked state this was the time you were incarcerated, or 2) if the work you did while incarcerated was very similar to the job you are applying for and needed to show your qualifications, state the type of work you did while incarcerated. If asked about employer, state the last unit you were incarcerated. If there is a place for comment, you can state this was while incarcerated.

UNIT FIVE

UNIT FIVE
RESUME CREATION AND LETTERS

Goal: Identify and create a useful resume.

What is a resume? A resume is a short – usually one page – description of your employment goals, skills, and work experiences.

The resume is your opportunity to tell the employer what you want them to know about you. This is different from the application. The application is written by the employer and asks questions that they want to know. The resume tells the employer what you want to know. Many people think that they do not need a resume and it is true that some employers do not ask for one. But having all of your skills placed on one page to be read can be a very effective way of giving the employer information.

Below is a list of things to avoid on your resume. Look this over carefully to avoid making some of the common mistakes.

Things to Avoid in Your Resume

- **False Information**. Many employers verify information. Most will immediately terminate any person who supplies false information.
- **Personal data** such as age, date-of-birth, weight, height, health, race, religion, marital or family status, dependent names, etc.
- **Your Social Security Number** – Do not risk identity theft.
- **A Photograph of yourself** – no one looks good in a photocopied picture.
- **Language with no meaning outside your industry** – human resource staff may not know exactly what you do so explain things so that anyone can understand.
- **A statement that you will take any job available** – it makes you look desperate.
- **Any shortcomings, weaknesses, or difficulties** – the resume is the place to sell yourself, not give reasons not to hire you.
- **Mention of legal difficulties** – again, the resume is the place to sell yourself.
- **Past salary,** wages, or salary requirements.
- **Reason for leaving** past job.
- **Your lack of job** – brings up the question of "why are you not working?"
- **I, me, my, or mine** – people know you are talking about yourself.
- **References.** Some people will put "References Available Upon Request" - Do not do this. The employer knows if they want references they can request them. This uses space you could use to discuss your skills.

- **Copy from another person's resume -** this is obviously a big no and could cost you a job opportunity.
- **Printing on both sides of the paper** – It is not professional to double side your resume.
- **Repetition** – if you repeat yourself by saying the same skill or event, you are missing chances to talk about skills you have not mentioned
- **Flashy colored or odd-sized paper** – don't be known as the person with the pink paper. Use 8 ½ by 11, resume approved paper, black ink. White paper is also acceptable.
- **Information not relevant or current** – if it is neither current nor relevant, do not include it. However, if 15 years ago, you worked at a warehouse for 6 years and you are applying for a warehouse job, you should include it. It shows that you understand the type of work.
- **Trying to fit two pages of information onto one page** – do not try to squeeze information into a resume by using small font. If necessary, use a second page.

Handling your felony on a resume: When thinking about your felony for your resume there are two primary ways to handle it. The first is to ignore it. Just leave that period of time off the resume. You know that by doing that you will be asked about the gap in the interview. However, since you will have already indicated you have a felony conviction on your application, you will say "It was during that time that I was incarcerated." And then begin discussing your incarceration (addressed in unit 7).

If you worked while incarcerated and learned a trade, you may wish to mention this. If so, it is acceptable to put your employer as the Department/Agency/Prison System who detained you. For example, in Texas your employer could be Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and in the location, place the unit you served. This is not a lie! And it allows you to describe your duties, skills, and training honestly. Yes, you may be asked about it. But as stated before, since you will have already indicated you have a felony conviction on your application, you have lost nothing, filled a gap, and described your skills – All elements of getting a job.

Review: On the following page, you will see two different types of resumes; the chronological and the combination. The chronological resume is organized by dates and talks about where you worked, when you worked, and what you did. The combination resume focuses more on what you can do but still brings in some dates. You can use each of these as a model to develop your own resume. After the two types of resumes, you will find two examples of a combination resumes.

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

Name
Address
Phone Number
E-mail (**if professional sounding**)

OBJECTIVE
Full-Time employment as a _____

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job-related skills you used.

Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job- related skills you used.

Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job-related skills you used.

Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job- related skills you used.

Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job-related skills you used.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE
United States _____, Start year – end year. Discharge Type
Served as _____. Attended (state military schools you attended)

EDUCATION
If Graduated
Degree, School giving the degree, year graduated

If did not graduate
Completed __ hours of college in the area of _____
If completed high school but did not go to college – leave education off

COMBINATION RESUME

Name
Address
Phone Number
E-mail (**if professional sounding**)

OBJECTIVE
Full-Time employment as a _____

QUALIFICATIONS
_____ years of experience in _____ and _____ related work
Job related skill
Job related skill
Job related skill
OJT or Trade school training
Transferable Skill and summary of example
Transferable Skill and summary of example
Transferable Skill and summary of example
Transferable Skill and summary of example
Adaptive skill, Adaptive Skill, Adaptive Skill
(mention machines you can operate: Able to operate...)
(mention supervision experience: Supervised teams of up to _____ employees)
(mention what you did in the military: Served as a ____ in the United States ___, or, Proven ability to work under stress while with the United States_____)

RELATED EXPERIENCE
Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a brief description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job-related skills you used.
Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a brief description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job-related skills you used.
Employer x, start year – end year
Position
Give a brief description of what you did at the job. Be sure to mention and describe the transferable and job-related skills you used.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE
United States _____, Start year – end year. Discharge Type
Served as _____. Attended (state military schools you attended)

EDUCATION
If Graduated: Degree, School giving the degree, year graduated
If did not graduate: Completed _____ hours of college in the area of _____
If completed high school but did not go to college – leave education off

EXAMPLE 1

Address
Dallas, TX 75216
Phone Number
E-mail

OBJECTIVE
Full-time employment as warehouseman, forklift operator, or materials handler

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 14 years of warehouse related experience and forklift operations
- 10 years as United States Army materials handler and logistics clerk
- Operated sit-downs, stand-ups, gas, and electric forklifts
- Loaded and unloaded materials including cold storage, dry goods, perishables, electronics, and hazardous materials
- Experienced with cherry-pickers and bob-cats
- Supervision and training experience in United States Army
- Analyzed orders for accuracy and completeness
- Investigated customer questions and reconciled invoice discrepancies
- Excellent safety record
- Basic computer skills
- Strong attention to detail, able to complete paperwork carefully and accurately
- Excellent skills in inventory control, shipping and receiving, and data entry
- Very comfortable working under stress and high-volume jobs

ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Army Achievement Award for performing logistics work in Rwanda
• Certificate of Accomplishment with Orowheat Bakery
• Materials Handler Certification - United States Army

EXPERIENCE
JanPak, Dallas, TX
Forklift Operator, 2004 - 2005
Unloaded and palletized paper products for stocking. Operated forklift. Kept paperwork.

Spherion and Nesco Resources, Dallas, TX
Warehouseman, 2002 - 2003
Palletized products. Stocked freezers. Prepared customer documents and labels. Operated shrink-wrap machine.

Orowheat Bakery, Dallas, TX
Bread Checker, 2000 - 2002
Filled orders, loaded trucks, and performed inventory control. Pulled cold storage orders. Organized and filled orders.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE
United States Army 1990-2000 Completed Quarter Master School

EXAMPLE 2

Address
Phone Number
E-mail

OBJECTIVE

Full-time position as lead or assistant maintenance

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Over 11 years of commercial and residential maintenance experience
- Over 5 years of pool operations
- Experience working under deadlines in both United States Army and in building maintenance
- Supervised maintenance crew of up to 4 workers in commercial and apartments
- EPA approved HVAC certification.
- Perform all phases of in-house maintenance including, painting, plumbing, electrical, and floors.
- Experience with drywall installation and repair.
- Use all types of painting equipment including sprayers.
- Operate hand and power tools including table and miter saws, routers, and drills.
- Replaced AC and heaters.
- Safely installed and repaired wall sockets, light switches, and plugs.
- Used voltmeters and ohm-meters.
- Installed ceiling fans and lights fixtures.
- Excellent customer service skills.
- Honest, dependable, and always on schedule.

EXPERIENCE

Big Time Staffing, Dallas, TX
Lead and Assistant Maintenance, 2000 - 2006
Performed make-ready on apartments. Pool operations. Supervised and trained employees as needed. Worked closely with tenants. Prepared reports for tenants.

Park Apartments, Denton, TX
Assistant Maintenance, 1999 - 2000
In house maintenance. Performed make-ready and pool operations. Performed HVAC, plumbing, carpentry, and electrical. Worked with lift-station.

Par Place, Plano, TX
Porter, 1995 - 1998
Performed make-ready and pool operations. Refinished and repaired pool.

Million Professional Services, Dallas, TX
Porter, 1985 - 1995
Performed apartment make-ready and pool operations. Assisted maintenance.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE
United States Navy, Guam, 1985 – 1988, Ocular Technician

Cover Letters and Thank-you Letters

It is recommended that you keep the cover letter simple. It should introduce yourself, make a brief statement about why you are sending the employer a resume, and then mention a couple of your job-related or transferable skills. An acceptable cover letter would look like this:

> Mr. John Smith
> 1234 Main St.
> Springfield, TX 75214
>
> Mr. Smith,
> I am responding to the ad I saw in the Springfield Daily News for the position of office manager. I have 7 years of experience in office management and strong skills in filing and completing reports. I have attached my resume. If you have any questions or would like to set up an interview, please do not hesitate to contact me.
> Thank you for your time.
>
> (sign your name here)
>
> James Johnson
> 215-555-1234

After an interview, you should send a thank-you note. This may seem like either overkill or like you are 'sucking up.' However, it is a good chance to put your name in the employer's mind and sell a few of your skills. An acceptable thank-you letter would look like this:

> Mr. John Smith
> 1234 Main St.
> Springfield, TX 75214
>
> Mr. Smith
> Thank you for your time on Friday. I wanted to let you know I am very interested in the position. I feel that my skills in [put in a few of the skills you know are important to the employer] makes me an excellent match of the job. Again, thank you for the opportunity to meet you and I look forward to hearing from you.
>
> (sign your name here)
>
> James Johnson
> 214-555-1234

Although not complicated, it does show you have professionalism and gives you another chance to sell your skills.

UNIT SIX

UNIT SIX - INTERVIEWING

Goal: Identify what to do and what not to do at an interview

Once the employer has reviewed your resume or application and finds that he or she would like to talk to you, an interview will likely be scheduled. This is usually the most anxiety provoking part of the job search process and so most people spend time trying NOT to think about it. This is likely to lead to being unprepared for the interview and not getting the job. Though thinking about the interview and how you are going to answer the tough questions may cause stress and be unpleasant, it is nothing compared to having to stumble over an answer, looking stupid, and leaving knowing you didn't get the job! The only thing that will improve your chances when the tough questions come is PLANNING!

The interview boils down to 2 main areas – 1) telling the employer what you want them to know and 2) answering the questions that they want to know. Both require different strategies and will require you to put a lot of thought into the answers before you even get to the interview.

DO's and DON'Ts of Interviewing

Items on the DO List

1. **Do plan to arrive on time or a few minutes early.** Late arrival for a job interview is never allowed. If you arrive late for an interview you tell the employer that you will be late for work. If you are going to be late, stop and call, apologize, and ask the employer if he/she wants you to come in or reschedule.
2. **If presented with an application, do fill it out neatly and completely.** Even if you have already filled out an application, do it again. Since it is likely the two applications will get together at some point, the two MUST MATCH. It is always a good idea to keep a 'cheat sheet' with all your information written down.

3. **Do greet the interviewer by last name if you are sure of pronunciation.** If not, ask the employer to repeat it.
4. **Do appear happy to meet the interviewer.** Smile and give the appearance of positive energy as you walk into the building/office.
5. **Shake hands.** You do not have to wait for the employer to reach out first.
6. **Do look a prospective employer in the eye while speaking.**
7. **Do ask the employer about the position.** Ask "can you tell me about what my duties will be?" This gets the employer talking about the job. If they mention specific skills or abilities about the job, make sure you tell him/her you have those skills and GIVE EXAMPLES.
8. **Do give facts**. Don't brag. Talk about specific things you did or accomplished including being employee of the month, saving the company money, or sales records.
9. **Do conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing; even if you decide you will likely turn it down**. Never close the door on an opportunity. The time to turn down a job is when you are offered it – not before. It may be that in a few weeks you might want that job.
10. **Do wait until you are offered a chair before sitting**. Sit upright, look alert, and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good communicator.
11. **Do show enthusiasm!** Everyone likes a friendly, enthusiastic person.

Items on the Don't List

1. Don't forget to bring a copy of your resume! Keep several copies with you.
2. Don't smoke, even if the interviewer does and offers you a cigarette. Eventually you will need to put your ashes somewhere. Also, some employers don't want smokers, even if the employer smokes, because smokers, as a group, take more breaks and get sick more often.
3. Don't answer with only "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible. If they say "So you worked at Washington Industries?" and you say only "Yes," you have told the employer nothing he does not already know. Answer with examples of skills such as "Yes. While there I operated forklifts, loaded and unloaded electronics, and performed inventory. I also supervised a team of three within the warehouse."
4. Don't lie. Answer questions truthfully. This does not mean you have to tell so much information that you will not get the job. But do not lie.
5. Don't make unnecessary derogatory remarks about your present or former employer. Even if the employer pushes you saying "I know Bob, your past boss. He's a jerk," just say something like "Well I didn't get that from him. We worked under a lot of stress and I learned a lot." You can make the interviewer very suspicious about what you will say about him/her if you attack your past boss.

6. Don't get deep into politics or controversial issues. If the interviewer does, try to do more listening than speaking since this could be a sensitive situation. These are no-win areas where you will likely waste interview time.
7. Don't inquire about salary, vacations, bonuses, retirement, etc., on the initial interview unless you are sure the employer is interested in hiring you. The questions you ask tell the employer what areas interest you. If you ask about vacation, you are thinking about time off. If you ask about retirement, you are interested in quitting. If you ask about insurance, you might be likely to get sick. Keep your questions focused on your duties and your interest in the company.

Preparation for Your Interview

Section 1 - Telling the employer what you want them to know

Goal: Identify the things you want an employer to know about you.
In Unit 3, three different types of skills were discussed:

- Job-Related Skills
- Transferable Skills
- Adaptive Skills

With each skill, you gave examples utilizing them on your jobs. These skills are the things you should focus on when meeting with an employer. Below, please re-list the skills and proofs that you completed in the earlier assignment. You will need this for the next assignment.

Job-related Skill #1

_____

Job-related Skill #2

_____

Job-related Skill #3

_____

Job-related Skill #4

_____

Job-related Skill #5

_____

Transferable Skill #1_____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill #2_____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill #3_____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill #4_____

Proof _____

_____

Transferable Skill #5_____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill #1_____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill #2_____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill #3_____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill #4_____

Proof _____

_____

Adaptive Skill #5_____

Proof _____

_____

The skills you listed are the things you will tell an employer about yourself. Remember, one piece of the interview is telling the employer what you want them to know. Telling employers about your skills is critical to getting the job you want. Many people looking for a job take a passive approach to describing their skills, waiting to be asked about specific things they can do. Many people think that the employer is looking for the perfect person to fill the job and knows exactly what he/she is looking for in the candidate. Many people think that the employer will ask all the questions and your job is to answer them and then wait for the next. To clarify, most employers are not professional interviewers; they can't read minds; they can't just look at you and know you can do the job; they can't just look at your resume and tell if you are going to fit in; they don't always know how your skills will help the company; and they sometimes don't have any idea what to ask you. Your job is to make sure everything you want to say gets said during the interview.

Preparation for Your Interview

Section 2 - When to talk about your skills

Goal: Identify opportunities to discuss your skills

Question: In an interview, when do you talk about your skills?
Answer: Every chance you get!

During an interview, you should try to find every opportunity to highlight what you can do for that company. There are several points in an interview that will give you the obvious opportunities.

The First Opportunity: The first opportunity usually presents itself early with the question "So, tell me about yourself?" This is the time to begin selling your skills, talents, and experiences. This is not the time to tell the employer about your personal life, the number of kids you have, your hobbies, your golf game, etc. Remember the employer is trying to decide if he wants to hire you, not date you. Keep the personal stuff off the table during the interview. When telling about yourself, talk about your transferable and adaptive skills, mention the number of years you have doing a related job, give proof with examples of what you can do, successes you have had, and management/training you have done. Assignment: Review the four examples of opening statements. Pick the two that best fits your needs and situations and complete by inserting your requested skills.

1) I have_____ years of experience in a number of jobs including _____

and _____.

I have experience with _____, _____
job related skill job related skill

and _____. I have experience with_____,
job related skill transferable skill

and _____, and I am _____ and
transferable skill transferable or adaptive skill

_____.
transferable or adaptive skill

2) For the last _____ years I have worked primarily as a _____,
job related

using/ working with/ operating/ _____. I have skills in _____
transferable

_____, _____, and _____.
transferable transferable transferable

I feel I am _____, _____, and
adaptive adaptive

_____.

3) I have experience in _____ and _____. I
job related job related

have skills with _____, _____, _____
transferable transferable transferable

and _____. I feel I am _____, _____,
transferable adaptive adaptive

and _____.
adaptive

4) I am _____, _____, and
adaptive adaptive

_____. I have worked in a number of places where I have
adaptive

_____, _____, _____, and
transferable transferable transferable

_____. On past jobs, I have been responsible for
transferable

_____, _____, and _____.
transferable or example transferable or example transferable or example

Middle Opportunities: Other opportunities come up throughout the interview. These are usually not direct questions but open statements by the interviewer. These might be "So I see you have worked at ABC Company" or "It appears you have experience in XYZ." Do not say "Yes" and leave it at that. Use these opportunities to talk about what you did at ABC Company or what kind of skills you have doing XYZ. For example, an employer says "So I see you worked for UPS for a year…"; you reply "Yes sir/ma'am, I was involved in a team that was responsible for loading and unloading all arriving and departing packages. I used electronic tracking equipment, forklifts, and computers. I also kept accurate logs of all shipments and assisted in maintaining paperwork for the supervisor." This statement, even though it is only 3 sentences, tells the employer the applicant has team skills ("involved in a team"), technical equipment skills ("electronic tracking equipment … and computers, drive forklifts, able to do paperwork, kept accurate logs of all shipments"), and was an asset to the management ("assisted in maintaining paperwork for the supervisor").

Assignment: In Unit 1, you identified occupations and what you did in those occupations. Below, write down a summary statement of your experiences including job duties, transferable skills, responsibilities, and achievements. You should mention either the actual employer ("At ABC company, I) or the type of work you did ("While doing shipping and receiving, I…"). Take your time completing this assignment. These summary statements are the ones you will use when you are talking about your skills and abilities during the interview.

Make sure you insert military experience into your descriptions. In the current climate, the military and veterans are held in very high regard. All things being equal, the veteran will likely be chosen over a non-veteran. You have earned the right to call yourself a veteran - use that right.

Job #1:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Job #2:

Job #3:

Job #4:

Job #5:

Closing Opportunities: The final opportunity for telling an employer about you is at the end of the interview. Often, an interviewer will ask you "Is there anything else I need to know?" or "Is there anything we haven't covered?" Take this as an opportunity to summarize yourself. It is also ok to state your closing summary if the employer says, "Well that is all the time we have". At that point, go ahead and say, "Thank you for your time, I feel I am a ..." and state your closing summary. This assures that the employer's last memory of you is of your skills.

An example may be "Thank-you for your time. I feel that my office skills, my experience in supervision, and my strong attention to detail would fit in well here.

Utilizing the "Describe Yourself" worksheet on page 110, write down your closing statement below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

UNIT SEVEN

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

There are two types of questions you will be asked in an interview, General and Specific. General Questions are questions the employer will ask everyone. These tend to be things like “Tell me about yourself?”, “What are your strengths and weaknesses?”, and “Where do you see yourself in five years?” The second type of questions are the Specific Questions because they are asked specifically to you because of something on your application or resume, or something they find out about in the interview. These can be “Why have you been out of work?”, “Tell me about your incarceration?”, or “Why were you fired from your last job?” You must know how to answer both types.

Questions Asked by Employers

Now that you know what you want to tell an interviewer and know when you are going to tell the interviewer, it is important to focus on the second part of the interview – Answering the Questions They Want to Know.

Goal: Identify problem questions and how to answer them.

There are always going to be difficult questions that require everyone to think hard about how they will answer. Questions like: “What are your weaknesses?”, “Why do you want to work for this company?”, or “Tell me about a difficult situation you had at a past job and how you handled it.” These types of questions are not designed to get a perfect answer, but instead they are asked to see if you have done your homework, if you know what kind of work is required for the job, and if you can be non-defensive and think on your feet.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Since there is not a perfect answer, each person's answers will be different. Here are some suggestions to some common questions:

"**Tell me about a weakness you have**"
Tell them about a weakness that can also be viewed as a strength. For example, "I am sometimes too detail oriented and have to keep myself from obsessing over the small things" or "I sometimes get impatient because I want a job to be done quickly. Sometimes I get frustrated with delays" or "I really enjoy working with a strong team and get frustrated when team members are not working as hard as me." Also, be prepared to discuss how your weakness will not deter you from doing your job or how you handle it.

"**Why do you want to work for this company**?"
Do your homework. Know what the company makes, know if they are stable, and know if they have a good reputation. Tell the employer that you feel your skills (remember that it's all about the skills) would match well with the company (make sure they actually do match) and that you hope to develop a career with the possibility of advancement (makes you look stable). If you have other reasons you would like to work for the company say them. BUT – don't look selfish; don't say "because you pay more than most", or "I hear you have a good heath plan", or "because I hear you are hiring." Also, do not say because I'm unemployed and really need a job.

"**Why did you leave your last job**?"
Keep it generally honest because there is a good chance they will call the past employer. Never say anything bad about your past supervisor!

"**What Are Your Strengths**?"
Questions like this give you a chance to talk about your skills. Do not be shy. Start talking about your job related, transferable, and adaptive skills and use your examples.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

"**Why Should We Hire You**?"
Summarize your experiences: "With five years' experience working in the restaurant business, I am familiar with all restaurant procedures and I am able to use all cooking equipment. I have a proven record of working in high pressure situations, both with teams and by myself. I'm confident I would be a great addition to your team."

"**What Are Your Goals**?"
Sometimes it's best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future. For example, "My immediate goal is to get a job in a company like this that I can use my computer skills. My long-term goal is to move up into a supervisor's position or management."

"**When Were You Most Satisfied in Your Job**?"
The interviewer wants to know what motivates you. If you can relate an example of a job or project when you were excited, the interviewer will get an idea of your preferences. "I was very satisfied in my last job, because I worked directly with the customers and their problems; that is an important part of the job for me."

"**What Are Three Positive Things Your Last Boss Would Say About You**?"
It's time to pull out more of your adaptive skills. This is a great way to brag about yourself through someone else's words: "My boss would say I'm a strong team player, I'm creative, and I work well under deadlines."

"**What Salary Are You Seeking**?"
It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first. Prepare by knowing the rate in your area and your bottom line or walk-away point. One possible answer would be: "I am sure when the time comes, we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?" another is "It would be negotiable depending on the shift I work and the responsibilities I would have."

"**Why did you leave your last job**?"
Be honest. If you were asked to leave, explain that you have taken responsibility for your actions and learned from the experience. Prove you have matured.

"**Aren't you too young/too old**?"
Reassure the interviewer with your adaptability if you're young. If he says or indirectly expresses that you are too old, reply that you have a good work history and are already trained. Additionally, you can discuss your maturity and experience as a strength. Say "I am older than some others, but I bring a lot of experience. I'm a steady worker. I'm mature, and don't act without thinking."

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

"**Aren't you over-qualified**?"
Mention that your qualifications show you are competent and able to learn, and the ability to do jobs at various levels gives you a wider outlook.

"**How do you cope with pressure**?"
Give an example of how you have dealt with previous pressures at work, such as meeting tight deadlines or handling difficult clients.

"**When can you start**?"
Say "right away" unless you are currently working. If you are working, tell the employer you have to give notice, but that you will do this immediately.

More Questions Asked by Employers

Assignment: Here are more questions asked by employers. You will see some from the above list as well as new ones. Please develop answers for each question. Remember, keep your answers focused on your skills. Next to each question is a comment on the best way to answer.

1. **Tell me about yourself.** Give your opening statement.

2. **Why should we hire you**? Mention your skills and give some examples.

3. **What did you dislike most about your previous boss/supervisor**? Never talk bad about a past employer. The interviewer will wonder if you will talk bad about him/her. Say something like "I didn't really dislike anything. We worked under a lot of stress and I learned a lot."

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

4. **What are your strengths**? Questions like this give you a chance to talk about your skills. Do not be shy. Start talking about your job related and transferable skills and use your examples.

5. **Why do you want to work here**? Talk about skills – "with my skills in office administration and attention to detail, I think I would fit in with your company"

6. **What are your short-range/long-range goals**? Your goals should always involve the company – Don't say "in 5 years I plan to move to the beach and make driftwood art." Say something like "My short-range goals are to learn my job well. Long term is to stay with a company like this and hopefully move up into management." NEVER say "in 5 years I want your job" – it may make you look like a threat.

7. **Why are you changing jobs**? Talk about wanting to do something different or use different skills you have – be specific about those skills.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

8. What do you look for in an ideal job? "My ideal job is where I can use my skills in _____ and _____."

9. Are you looking for a permanent or temporary job? Answer honestly.

10. What two or three things are most important to you in the job? Talk about some of the things you want in a job. But remember, if these are not what the job involves pick other ones.

11. Are you self-motivated? Organized? Give examples.

12. How do you work in a group? Give examples.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

13. What did you like about your previous job? Mention some of the things that are similar to the job you are applying.

14. How do you work under stress, pressure, and deadlines? Give examples.

15. What work do you enjoy the most? Least? For "most", mention things that are similar to the job you are applying. For "least", do not mention things that the job involves.

16. Name three major accomplishments in your present job. Give examples, even if they are from jobs from your past.

17. What qualifications do you have for this job? Talk about your skills and give examples.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

18. How would you evaluate your performance on your present job? Mention your skills, especially your adaptive skills.

19. What have you learned from your mistakes? Mention old mistakes and how you fixed them.

20. How do you think your education has prepared you for this job? If you do not have formal education, talk about on the job learning and/or military experience.

21. Are you more comfortable working by yourself or with others? Give examples of where you have done both. Now remember, if you really do not like working by yourself, don't apply for a job as a forest ranger.

22. Tell me about a problem you have solved in your present job. Describe a problem from a past job, even if it is not from your most recent job.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

23. Have you had experience as a supervisor? In what capacity? Give examples. Do not forget military experience.

24. What has influenced your career decisions? Talk about the skills you had or developed early, such as in the military, and that you wanted to use these skills in your jobs.

25. Do you object to overtime? Travel? Rotating shifts? If you do not have a problem, say you don't. If you can't work one of these, say "I would rather have a job that doesn't have rotating shifts. Is that an option?"

26. What interests you about this type of work? Mention your skills.

27. Have you had any experience in this line of work? If yes, describe your job-related skills and experiences. If you have not done exactly that kind of work, talk about your transferable skills that relate to the job.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

28. Give me three adjectives that describe you. Mention adaptive skills and give examples with each. **DO NOT forget the examples**.

29. How would your supervisor describe you? Give adaptive skills and examples. Do not worry if your supervisor would not use those exact terms. This is a chance to give your skills.

30. What do you like to do in your spare time? Do not mention anything that would worry the employer like, going out and partying or drag racing.

31. What would you do if a customer started shouting at you about a defective product? "I would try to calm the customer down, listen to their concern, and try to fix the problem. If I couldn't, I would get the manager." Then give an example (write your example down below.)

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

32. Have you taken any classes recently? Attended workshops/seminars? Mention the classes or training you have received. If it is not a class but is on the job training, talk about that.

33. Define success. Say "success is using my skills in [transferable skill, transferable skill and transferable skill] in a job like this, where I could move up into management or become a supervisor."

34. Give me a specific example of something you have done that shows initiative. Give an example.

35. What person has had the greatest influence on you? A rare question but pick someone. It can be a famous person, family member, or friend. A good one is someone from the military to restate you are a veteran. Always mention what traits they had that you admire or possess.

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ANSWERING QUESTIONS

36. Tell me about your past attendance record. What do you consider an acceptable attendance record? Even if your attendance has been bad, talk about the kind of employee you plan to be. Say "I only miss work if I am sick or there is an emergency." If you have a history of drug or mental health problems, missing work for those reasons would make the statement true.

37. Describe a good supervisor. The interviewer is trying to decide if you will fit in. Mention some things such as fair, focused on goals, and willing to train and you should do fine.

38. What did you earn on previous jobs? If your last job was low paying, say what you were making but say it like "I had to take my last job to make ends meet so I was making minimum wage. It would not have been my first choice, but I needed to pay my bills."

39. What can you tell me about your current job? If you are working, mention your transferable and job-related skills. If you are not working, mention those skills from your most recent jobs.

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ANSWERING QUESTIONS

40. Why do you want to start working again? Talk about how you like to work and that whatever problems you had before are over and will not interfere with work.

41. What do you see yourself doing in five years? Say "working for a company like this where I can hopefully move up into management or a supervisor's position."

42. Is there anything else I should know? Do not blow it with this question by blurting out negative things about yourself. Also, do not just say "Nope." and end the interview. If there is something you forgot to say, say it. Otherwise use your closing statement and thank the interviewer for his/her time.

43. What questions do you have for me? ALWAYS have questions. If unsure what to ask, pick at least 3 from the list on the following page.

25 Questions To Ask The Employer

1. What will my duties be in this position?
2. Is there a written job description?
3. What will my principal responsibilities be?
4. To whom do I report?
5. What type of training program will I be involved in?
6. When was this position created?
7. How many people have held this position?
8. How/by whom/how frequently will my work be evaluated?
9. How are promotions determined?
10. What do you like best about working for this company?
11. Is the position considered entry-level? Mid-level?
12. Does the company post job listings for all openings within the organization?
13. How long do people usually stay in this job?
14. What is the typical working day/week?
15. What type of working environment will I have?
16. Will I share an office? Have my own?
17. May I see my work station?
18. What types of equipment/machines/systems will I be expected to use?
19. Is flextime available?
20. Will I be involved in evening or weekend business assignments?
21. Does the company have a physical fitness center? Employee counselor? Day-care center?
22. What type of job-related expenses could I expect?
23. Is there room for future advancement?
24. Does the company encourage/provide/fund continuing education for employees?
25. When do you expect to make a hiring decision?

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Addressing Problem Areas in Work History

Goal: Identify weaknesses in your work history that you may be uncomfortable being asked in an interview and begin thinking of ways to explain them.

Work history can be one of the most powerful factors in both getting and not getting a job. Employers often look at work history to help tell them what kind of employee you will be. Also, employers will often be looking for someone who has done the same kind of job in the past. However, few of us have a perfect work history and most will need to be able to confidently explain their shortcomings. Below, check off the work history problems that apply to you. All the ones you check may not be a problem to an employer, but these are likely to be areas you will need to address during an interview and minimize on a resume. Assignment: Put a check mark by the statement that applies to you. Additional lines are available to write out a problem area that is not listed.

_____ Had more than 3 jobs in the last 5 years

_____ The longest job ever held is less than 3 years

_____ Prison record in the last 10 years

_____ Unemployed for more than 6 months

_____ Fired from a job in the last 5 years

_____ Cannot do the work done in the past

_____ Plan on applying for a type of job never done

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

Once problems in your job history have been identified, it is time to begin thinking about how to describe these or report these in the best possible light. Doing this can be a real challenge and you may either feel the urge to lie or the urge to be brutally honest; neither will help you get employed. For example, let's say you lost your last job because you were late too many times. Telling an employer "I was laid off because of cutbacks" can backfire if the employer checks your references or if the employer knows there were no layoffs. Also, if it is discovered that you gave false information on an application or in an interview, you could be fired without any other cause. On the other side, telling the employer "I was fired because I couldn't get to work on time" would be a problem since it makes the employer wonder if you are worth the risk that you would not be punctual with him.

UNIT SEVEN
ANSWERING QUESTIONS

When discussing problems with your work history or past, you need to report as much information as to answer the question, but be able, if possible, to explain or shade the history so that the employer is still comfortable hiring you. In our example above, lying or being brutally honest are both risky strategies. Shading your answer with a response such as "I had to leave because I had quite a few transportation problems that interfered with my doing my job" is a middle of the road answer that does not have the negative effect of "I was fired because I couldn't get to work on time." If you must use a statement like this, you want to make sure you follow it up with an assurance that this will not be a problem for the person who is deciding to hire you now. So, when hit with the question, "Why did you leave your last job?" you should answer with something similar to "I had to leave because I had quite a few transportation problems that interfered with my doing my job. However, my transportation problems are now solved, and they will not affect my employment with your company."

Below are several situations that may occur and strategies for handling. Each case is unique, and it is recommended that you consult the vocational team to help iron out the specifics of your situation.

Have not worked in a while due to substance abuse, treatment, or some other reason: Have you worked any, at anything during that time? Have you mowed lawns, helped a friend repair his car, completed odd jobs, or helped take care of a relative (even if no pay)? Have you done any volunteer work or vocational work assignments at the VA? If you have done something, even part-time work or for no pay, use it to fill in gaps, especially if the gap is recent. If you are participating in VA work programs such Incentive Therapy (IT) or Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), be careful how you describe it on paperwork or during interviews. You don't want to claim you were working for the VA because you technically did not – and the VA will say they have never heard of you. You may want to describe the position as a temporary position at the VA and list your IT supervisor or the head of the CWT program as the contact person. Always check with the supervisor first.

No work, of any kind, due to a treatment program: If you were in a treatment program that is away from where you are searching, you can always state you had moved to the city the program is located (the truth), could not find appropriate employment, and have returned to where you are searching because the employment opportunities are better. However, you may need to be somewhat direct, by stating "During that time I could not work while I took care of some personal problems. It took a while for me to settle things, but now I'm ready to start work again, and I guarantee those problems will not affect my job here." This approach is probably the best if you state it with confidence.

Many short-term jobs: This will require some resume cleaning and a rehearsed way of helping an employer see you as a stable asset. If there are common themes in the kind of work you do (cooked at 4 places for 3 months each over an 18 months), you can combine these on a resume and describe them to an employer as "I've been working as a cook for the last 18 months." If asked who you worked for, you can respond with something like "I have worked for company 1, company 2, company 3, and company 4, preparing meals, helping organize the kitchen, and helping with quality control of the stock." This approach brings the discussion back to what you can do for this employer and quickly moves it away from the short-term nature of the jobs.

Prison: Likely the most difficult problem to discuss. I recommend that you never lie about whether you have been in prison. The reality is that there are some employers that will not or cannot hire a person with a record. If you have a record you have to answer honestly the application question "have you ever been convicted of a felony?". If they ask what the felony was, it is acceptable to state, "I will discuss at interview." If the company cannot hire you due to felony, it will not matter what the felony is. If they can hire you, you want to be able to explain it in person. Once you get the interview, you will need to be able to explain the event in the best light or describe how you have improved and changed yourself.

Ways of stating these are statements like "When I was younger I made some mistakes and was charged with _____. While in prison I worked hard, attended classes, and tried to better myself. I feel that I have succeeded and would be an asset to your company because I can ..." then get the discussion back on what you can do for them. Remember, a record is not an employment death sentence. However, it is something that will make you work twice as hard and you will need to be better prepared than other applicants. Addressing incarceration is discussed in more detail in Unit 8.

Assignment: List problems you checked from the previous assignment and then write down a broad way of describing it and either what you've done to correct the problem or why things are different, so the problem won't return.

Problem 1 _____

Explanation _____

_____

_____

Why it will not be problem now _____

_____

_____

Problem 2 _____

Explanation _____

_____

_____

Why it will not be problem now _____

_____

_____

Problem 3 _____

Explanation _____

_____

_____

Why it will not be problem now _____

_____

_____

Problem 4 _____

Explanation _____

_____

_____

Why it will not be problem now _____

_____

_____

UNIT EIGHT

UNIT EIGHT
ADDRESSING INCARCERATION

(Contributed by VA- American Lake)

One of the greatest challenges you might face when job searching is how to make it to an interview without being screened out. *Here are some suggestions to help improve your chances of securing a face to face interview.*

1. Apply for positions that request a resume (include a cover letter) rather than an application, because criminal records are not usually detectable on a resume. Craigslist can be useful for this reason as well, however, be wary of scams and only finding employment that is under the table (which will not pay into your unemployment and social security/retirement taxes for your long-term benefit and will not help you improve your credit scores or help you in securing stable housing).
2. Find job openings by calling employers, briefly present your top three selling points, and ask if they could use someone like that. If yes, offer to fax (or email) your resume and ask for a good time to call back for follow up. At no time during this first phone call, should you mention your criminal record unless asked.
3. Ask a friend to introduce you to his boss or coworker, giving you the opportunity to practice marketing yourself and your skills without discussing your past.
4. Walk into businesses and ask for the hiring manager. Have your resume with you and be prepared for a brief on the spot interview.
5. Talk to your parole officer or probation officer (if you have one) about where other ex-offenders have gone to work in the local area.
6. Utilize temporary agencies and day labor agencies for the opportunity to work and show employers you are reliable and have great skills. This may turn into a working interview where, in time, the employer may be more willing to look past your felony conviction.
7. Target employers, industries, and career fields that are less likely to have strict policies on background checks. Target employers that have high turnover rates such as in Food Service as they are more likely to have regular job openings and would appreciate the loyalty and reliability you could offer if interested in that type of work.

How to Disclose Your Conviction on the Application

Question: Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony? If yes, please explain
Write: Will explain at interview.

Always write “will explain at interview”. This keeps your information more private and it’s easier to talk about the details than to write an explanation.

UNIT EIGHT
ADDRESSING INCARCERATION

How to Address Incarceration Work Experience on an Application and/or Resume

If some of the work you performed while incarcerated relates to the type of work you are currently seeking, you will want to list this on your application and resume. List the job and only the year for dates of employment, even if you moved from facility to facility. Highlight any promotions or advancements you may have had. Use the abbreviated name of the corrections facility and then use the street address, city and state for the address. Get permission to list your last work supervisor's direct phone number. If you don't have it or can't find it, list the main number for the facility.

Don't advertise your incarceration. Be truthful in your work history, but your incarceration information is between you and the interviewer, not everyone who sees your application.

How to Disclose Your Conviction During an Interview

When you are in the position to disclose your conviction (interview), you should be prepared to do two things.

1. **Take responsibility for your actions.** Acknowledge that at that time "you made a mistake". Do not go into detail about your conviction! This should be done in less than one minute.
2. **Describe why the employer should give you a chance.** Focus on how you've changed your life for the better because of this experience. Remember, the employer wants to hire your future, not your past. This should take less than three to five minutes.

Try the COPE – Conviction Response:

Comfort the employer. Let the employer know that your offense did not happen on the job. For example, "Yes, I was convicted of a felony, but it was not job related." If your felony was job-related, you may need to get individual assistance from the vocation counselor on how to address this.

Own it. "There was a time in my life when I was making some bad choices". Do not add what degree it was and do not go into detail regarding your offense. Also, do not blame others, even if you don't believe it was your fault. It will sound to the employer like you are making excuses.

Positives. "I thought a lot about where my life was going, and I decided to make some positive changes." Now is the time to talk about what you have accomplished since your conviction, such as education, treatment, previous employment, and so on.

Encourage the employer. "I am a good worker and I am excited for an opportunity to prove my skills with your company." Tell them that you want the job!

Here is a sample script:

Use the blanks in the sample below to write out how you can talk about your criminal history.

There is something that you have the right to know:

In (year)_____, I made a poor choice. I admit that this was a serious error in my judgment and I want to assure you that I have changed. Since that time, I have (Say how, use key words): _____

_____

I also worked while I was incarcerated as a _____ *and learned how to: (say what you learned, use key words)* _____

_____. *Since my release, I have (say what you have done to improve yourself since release from prison)* _____

_____

I am aware that my past actions may cause you to question my judgment, but I am prepared to do whatever it takes to prove that I am a reliable and capable employee.

Do not get into a lengthy conversation about the crime or what goes on in an institution. Keep your answer simple and clear (vague answers sound like you are hiding things).

"I'm glad you asked because I want you to feel comfortable hiring me. I'd like to be perfectly upfront. I have been incarcerated. I have made some mistakes for which I am very sorry. But one thing I learned in prison: I don't want to go back. I am now clear in my goals and anxious to prove myself in a job setting. I have learned from my mistakes and intend to be a conscientious, dedicated worker."

Ex-Drug Offender Specific Script:

In general, it is not recommended to go into detail about being in a drug treatment program during a job interview. As stated in earlier units, this isn't typically known by the employer unless you volunteer the information. However, if you are in a situation where the employer does happen to know, and they directly ask about it, the following script is good way to address it:

"I have been in a residential treatment program for over a year. I've learned a lot about myself and realize that I wasted a lot of time and energy. I have been off drugs for 18 months now, and I intend to stay that way. I attend my meeting on a continuous basis and even mentor others (say this only if true). I've been studying over these past months and setting new career goals. I'm excited about going back to work, earning my living, and becoming a productive member of society. I have a lot of positive goals, and I'm anxious to start achieving them."

Employment and Parole: Working Together

During your first meeting with your parole officer, talk about your job search. Your job must meet the approval of your parole officer. It's better to ask questions up front, before you start looking.

- Are there jobs you will not be allowed to do? People you can't work with or around?
- Are there parts of town where you can't work?
- Can you drive to and from a job if you have a valid license and a licensed, insured car?
- Are you going to have to find a job that's on a bus line?
- Are there any other restrictions?

TIP: Your parole officer must verify your employment, so it is a problem if you get a job that doesn't issue a paycheck or pay stub. If an employer is willing to document the dates and hours you work and your pay, then you might receive permission, but you should confirm with your PO first.

Things to Consider When Job Searching:

You probably can't work in a bar or nightclub unless you have no history of alcohol abuse and can give a good reason to work there. Very few people receive permission to work in a bar or club. You might be allowed to serve alcohol as a waiter or waitress in a restaurant.

A truck driving job that involves crossing state lines probably will not be allowed. If you could find a job driving within the state, you might receive permission.

Some employers may not know what parole is or how it works. Your boss needs to know what to expect from your parole officer. Your parole officer needs to know what your boss is going to expect from you. Your role is to help those two communicate.

Since your parole officer is going to have to verify your employment, prepare your boss for these visits and phone calls. Make sure you take pay stubs to every meeting with your parole officer. This may reduce visits from the parole officer to the job site. It may be helpful if your boss lets your parole officer know about your job responsibilities and work hours. You may need to explain the conditions of your parole to your boss. Urinalysis (UA) and breath analysis (BA) tests are a condition of parole. Explain this system to your employer and do everything you can to minimize the impact on your job schedule. It's a good idea to promise (and actually do) to make up for any lost time.

Your boss needs to know that you will be reliable. If you don't have permission to drive or don't have a car, will public transportation or a bicycle get you to and from the job?

UNIT NINE

UNIT NINE - CALLING ALL JOBS

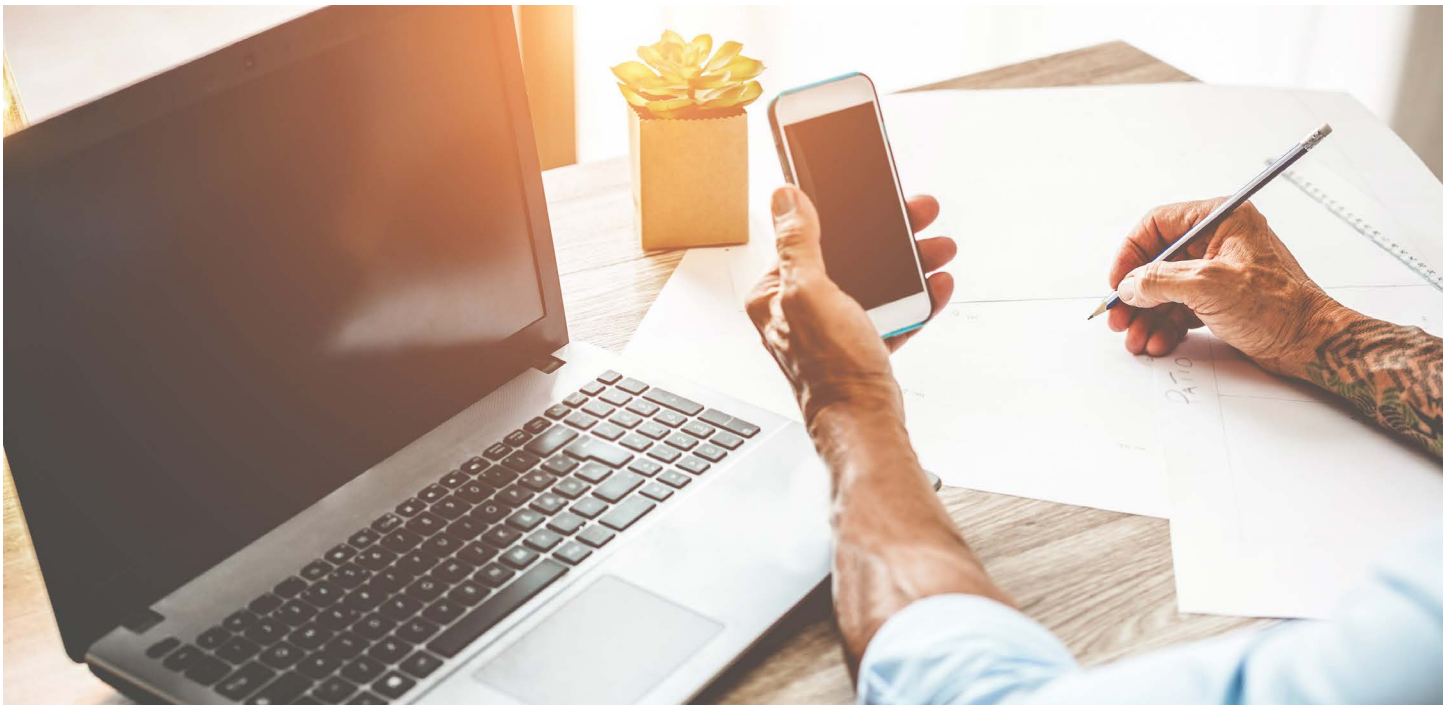
Goal: Learn to use the phone to generate job leads.

Most jobs are filled before they are ever advertised. A company will have an opening and another employee at the company will suggest someone and that person will get the job. Companies prefer to get people this way because it saves time and money that goes with advertising. It has been suggested that as many as 65% of jobs are filled by not advertising.

An important part of looking for work is Cold Calling. Cold Calling is when you call an employer without knowing if they have an opening. When you talk to the employer, you will tell them about your skills and ask if they have any openings.

Though you will get a lot of "no" responses, you can call about 20 employers in an hour. If you only use the want ads you may be able to go to 3 or 4 employers a day. Using cold calls, if you only get two yes for every 10 calls, calling for two hours, 40 calls, would get you 8 yes responses! As can be seen, cold calling can be very effective in generating potential jobs.

What To Say:
You will need a script based on your skills. At the very least use your opening statement you created in Unit 6-Interviewing. This statement should be one that tells your experiences, your skills, and the type of work you are looking for. If you are applying for different types of jobs you will need to use different information in your opening statements, so make sure your skills and experiences match.



Fill in the blanks below to develop your script.

"Hello, my name is _____ and I am looking for a position as a(n) _____.

(write your opening statement)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have any openings, and may I come in and fill out an application?"

The cold calls are most effective on Mondays. It is on Mondays that many employees do not come in to work from the weekend and so employers need someone quickly. Also, Friday is often the day employers like to fire because they don't have to deal with problems at work the next day. They will need someone on Monday.

Once you have your script, you need to decide who to call. The first place to start is the phone book. The yellow pages have an index that lists all the categories. Go through all the categories and put checks by the ones that interest you. Next, think about the categories that hire individuals with your skills. For example, florists may seem like you must have experience with flowers, but they also hire A LOT of delivery drivers. Almost every large department store has warehouses. Further, hospitals need office staff, inventory specialists, and housekeepers. Once you have identified the groups that hire people with your skills, begin calling each company from those lists.

If you call and say you are interested in a job, many companies will send you to the human resource department – this is not the place to be. Ask to talk to the head of the department. If you want a warehouse job, ask for the warehouse supervisor. If you want an office job, ask for the office manager.

If you know the name of the person you want to talk to, ask for that person by name. You can even call and ask for the name of the warehouse manager and then call back the next day and ask for that person by name. It might feel sneaky, but it will work and give you an opportunity to say your cold calling script to a direct supervisor.

Some helpful points:
If the employer says they don't have any openings, ask "When do you think you may be hiring?" If they give you a date, ask if you can come in and fill out an application.

If they don't know when they will be hiring, ask "May I come in and fill out an application for any future openings?"

If they say they don't want you to fill out an application, ask them "Can I call back again and see if there are any openings?"

Finally, thank them and move on to the next on the list.

This will have taken you about 2-3 minutes, not much time at all for the opportunity to talk to the hiring person, find out about jobs, and maybe put in an application that's not even posted yet!

UNIT TEN

UNIT TEN - NETWORKING

GOAL: Develop a network of people to help you find a job.

Networking is a critical part of job search where you have people you know helping you with your job search. This will expand the number of potential jobs you find out about. Think about it, if you are looking for a job, you can spend about 40 hours a week searching. But if you get 8 people helping you look, doing what might take you 5 additional hours a week, that would be an extra 40 hours of looking each week. Put another way, you only have 1 pair of eyes looking for work. If you can get 8 other folks to help look and each of them gets 2 other people (another 16), you will have 25 pairs of eyes looking for your job!

Where do you find members of your network? You need to think of everyone and anyone who would be willing to help you find employment. Some of these people may be:

- Former employers
- Your P. O.
- Relatives
- Friends
- Support groups members
- People you know socially
- People at recovery meetings
- Former co-workers
- Ministers
- Church members

The best way to approach developing a network is to first identify where you know people (Church, support groups, the VA, relatives, friends, etc.). Next write down names of those you know, even if you are not sure if they will help – until you ask, you don't know.

To do this, fill out the form below:

The first area I know people: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

The second area I know people: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

The third area I know people: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

The fourth area I know people: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

The second area I know people: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Use more sheets if needed.

Once you have these names, you need to contact these individuals. Now, it is not always going to be easy, asking for help never is. However, ask yourself, is it easy being unemployed? Is it easy spending every day looking for work? Is it easy not having enough money? Since the answer most of the time is "NO", then you need to contact your network. Even though it may not be easy, most people will be willing to help.

How should you ask? First, if you have not talked to the person in a while, remind them when you were around them. Continue the conversation with the steps below:

1. **Tell them you are looking for work.** Be honest about this fact; people are more likely to help if they really understand your situation.
2. **Tell them exactly what kind of job you are looking for.** This is very important. It helps the person to be more likely to find jobs you are qualified to do.

3. **Ask them if they know of any jobs or if there are any openings where they work.** If you don't ask, you may not find out.
4. **Ask them if they could ask some people they know to help look.** You want them to add to the network by asking people they know.
5. **Ask them if you can call them back to see if they have heard anything or made a decision.** Most of the time they will say 'OK.' It is not a guarantee, but most will. If they say yes, be sure to CALL THEM BACK!! It is easy for the members of your network to forget to look even if they truly want to help. Keep contacting them so they will keep looking.
6. **Always say thank-you, even if they don't say they will help.** Never close a door!

UNIT ELEVEN

UNIT ELEVEN - JOB FAIRS

Goal: Learn tips for making use of a job fair.

A job fair is a great place to gather information about potential employers and make contacts that can lead to your first job. This is an opportunity to contact many employers in a short amount of time. However, you and the other 100-500 people are trying to make contact, convince the employers they are a good match, and get information about the companies so the competition can be very tough. Here's some advice on how to make the most of your time.

1. **Find out who will be there**. If you can, find out as much about who will be there as you can. If you don't do your homework, you can't prepare the resumes you need to bring or the questions you need to be ready to answer.
2. **Look professional.** Dress like you are going to an interview. Take only a folder or small briefcase, some paper, a couple of pens, and copies of your resumes.
3. **Copies of your resume** (25 to 40 depending on the size of the event). Make sure your resume fits the type of jobs that are being sought by the employers – it could be a great resume, but if they are looking for forklift operators and your resume focuses on phone sales skills, there won't be a match. It is a good idea to take different resumes for each type of job you are considering.
4. **Make a positive first impression.** First impressions are important. Try to make good eye-contact. Smile at the employer. Shake hands and say your name. Your lead-in sentence should be "Hi my name is [your name]. I'm interested in hearing about opportunities at your company."
5. **Give your 30-second Commercial.** State your 30-second commercial that you developed in Unit Nine-Calling All Jobs. This keeps the topic focused on your skills and what you want the employer to know.

6. **Get there early and stay late.** Few employers stay until the end so if there is someone specifically you want to talk to, arrive toward the beginning of the fair. That being said, towards the end of the fair when the crowd dies down is a good time to spend more personal time with the employer, so don't be afraid to hang around waiting for your chance to shine.
7. **Get business cards from the employers and follow-up with a phone call**. The employer is going to get dozens of resumes so if you like what you heard, call the employer the following business day.
8. **Apply for the job outside of the job fair.** The employer is going to go back to the office with dozens of resumes to go through to get to yours. Even if you gave a resume at the fair, if you liked what you heard, go to the company the next business day and fill out an application for the job you talked about at the fair. It may be put into a smaller stack and you may then have an advantage.
9. **Treat every contact like an interview.** Don't let the setting fool you. You are on an interview every time you talk to an employer, so act like it!

Handling your felony: This is a tricky thing at the job fair. As always, try to find out ahead of time which employers attending the fair can hire those with felonies and focus on those employers. Do not bring up this information on your own unless you feel that it is important to disclose.

In general, it is better to proceed with the conversation as if you did not have a felony. Telling them about the felony too soon will put off some employers; you want to get them interested in you first. Once they are interested, you may bring it up. Understand that this may change some employers' minds about you. However, you have a better chance of them "working something out" to let you work there once they are interested.

UNIT TWELVE

UNIT TWELVE
WHERE TO LOOK

Goal: Identify job search strategies and how to improve them.

Finding where jobs are can be a frustrating event; but remember, getting hired is a numbers game. The chance of getting a job is related to the number of jobs you apply to and how prepared you are. To increase your chances, you must find more jobs to apply for during your job search.

A trap many people fall into is using only one or two ways of finding where jobs are and then telling themselves they have done as much as possible. This sets you up for a low number of callbacks, which will only cause you to become more frustrated.

Assignment: Below are several ways people find where jobs are. Place a check mark by each that you have used in the past.

_____ Want Ads
_____ Internet
_____ Job Fairs
_____ Talked to family
_____ Talked to a friend
_____ Saw help wanted sign
_____ Job Banks
_____ Stopped and asked an employer
_____ Called employers
_____ Talked to employees
_____ Used Placement Agency
_____ Other: _____
_____ Other: _____
_____ Other: _____

How many did you check? _____

Rate yourself:

1 to 3 different ways:	Expect to be looking a long time
4 to 6 different ways:	Going to miss a lot of chances
7 to 9 different ways:	A good chance to find most jobs
10 to 12 different ways:	Excellent use of search resources

If you are not satisfied with where you fall, then you will need to increase the resources you use to find jobs. Below are some pointers.

UNIT TWELVE
WHERE TO LOOK

Want ads – Sunday and Wednesday are the best days with the want ads. Read over all of them. You may find a job that sounds good and fits your skills.

Internet – Searching the usual job sites (monster, indeed, CareerBuilder, etc.) are good. However, most jobs are not posted on the internet unless they are technical or professional, so do not use only the internet (don't forget your cold calls). Also, if you apply online, it may be useful to follow up in person.

Job Fairs – A group of companies or a big company currently hiring will have their managers and human resource people in one place to talk about the openings, often located at a hotel or convention center. Make sure you take plenty of resumes to hand out and try to talk to a person, even for a few minutes, so they remember you when you follow up.

Talk to Family and Friends – Call them. You may feel strange or awkward asking them if they know of any jobs but most of the time they already know you are looking, and most people like to help. Don't forget to talk to acquaintances that you know.

Job Banks – Sign up and search job banks (example: Texas workforce commission). Check your local unemployment office for options.

Potential employer(s) – If there is an employer you would like to work for or that you think might be able to use your services, stop by without seeing an ad and ask to talk to a manager. Express interest in the company or the type of work and talk up your experience. This strategy is a good way to fill down time or to hit a large number of companies in a certain area.

Cold Call – Get on the phone and call employers in the yellow pages and ask them if they are hiring.

Talk to employees – Ask employees in your area or at companies you are near if the company is looking for new hires.

Use a placement agency – Different from temp agencies, as these assist you in finding permanent employment.

UNIT TWELVE
WHERE TO LOOK

Generate a list of contacts you will use on your job search.

Want Ads: Which Paper(s)_____

Check ahead of time to find out if you have access to it or will you need to get one.
Do you have access to it? Yes No
If no, how will you get one? _____

Each weekend BEFORE starting job search identify 5 jobs from the want ads you will apply – Name, Phone Number, and Address (if printed)

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____

Internet: Do you know how to get to the internet? If no, find out.

Date I found out how to get to the internet: _____
List three job internet sites you will search

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

Which family members will you ask about employment?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

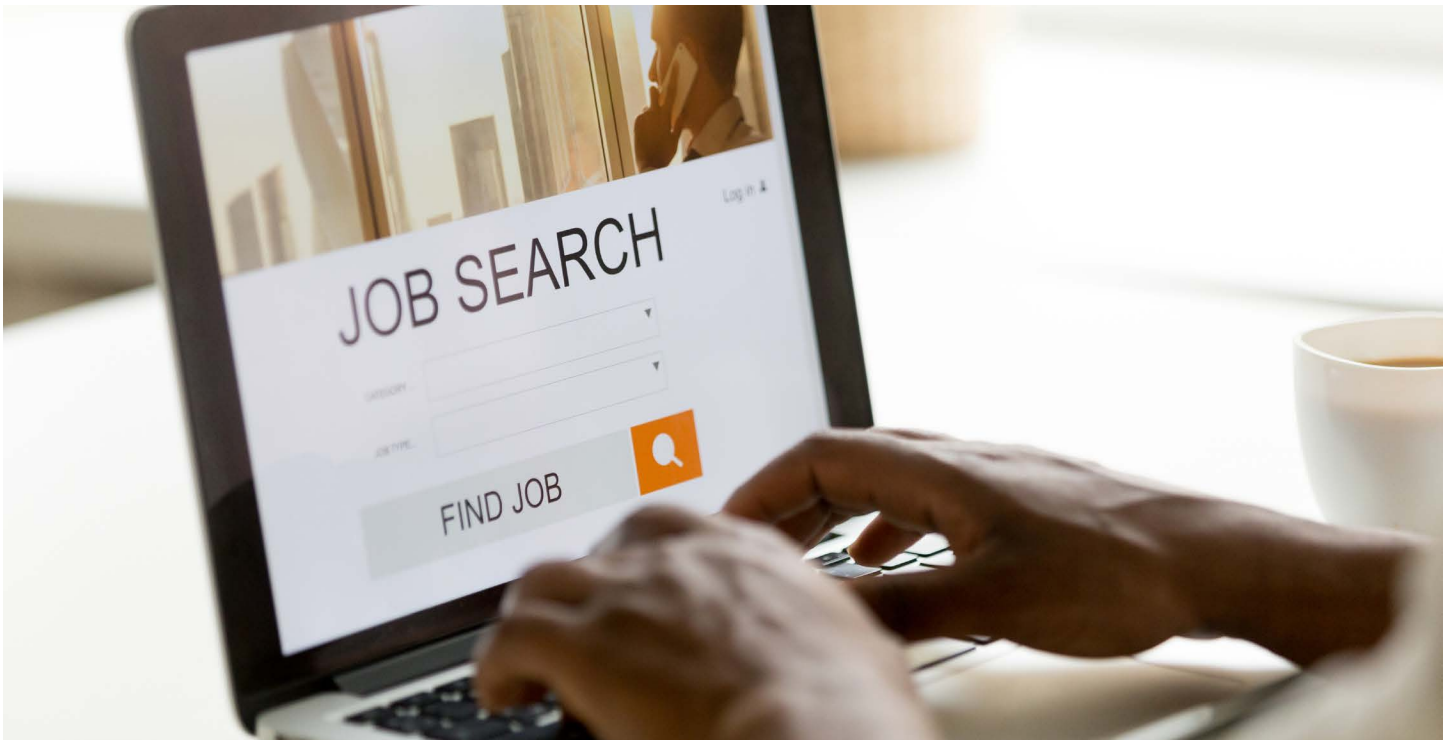
Which friends, acquaintances, and former co-workers will you call?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

UNIT TWELVE
WHERE TO LOOK

List 10 companies/employers and PHONE NUMBERS from the phone book you will call that do the type of work you desire.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



UNIT THIRTEEN

UNIT THIRTEEN
YOU HAVE THE JOB. NOW WHAT?

Although this manual is focused on getting employment, once you have a job, you need to keep it! Let's start with figuring out problems you have or have had in the past.

Assignment: Here is a list of common problems that can occur on a job. Check off the ones that have kept you from staying on a job.

_____1 Frequently missing work
_____2 Leaving workstation without permission
_____3 Arriving late for work or leaving early
_____4 Getting along with co-workers
_____5 Getting along with supervisors
_____6 Usually get "the short end of the stick"
_____7 Employer discriminated against me due to legal history
_____8 Dislike working conditions or pay
_____9 Get frustrated with too many "nit-picking rules"
_____10 Personal problems interfere with work performance
_____11 Emotional (mood) problems interfere with work performance (depression, anxiety, etc.)
_____12 I usually know more or am smarter than my supervisors
_____13 Substance use interfered
_____14 Too many pressures on the job
_____15 Lack of self-confidence
_____16 Unable to concentrate
_____17 Dissatisfied with what I'm doing

Based on other Veterans responses, the most common problems that have interfered with Veterans keeping employment were:
#1. Substance use
#2. Personal problems
#3. Feeling like they know more than supervisor
#4. Dislike working conditions or pay

Take a few minutes and think about the ones you checked above. Although each Veteran looks at problems differently, here are some things to think about for each of the areas.

Frequently missing work
It is important to understand that an employer only wants you for one reason: **to make the company money**. If you are not at work, it shows the employer that you cannot be depended upon. This does not mean if you are sick you should come in and infect everyone else.

However, if you take frequent days off (more than one or two a month), are sick frequently, or call in on Mondays or Fridays, then the employer may decide they cannot depend on you. If you have missed work a lot in the past, write down how you plan to address that.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Leaving workstation without permission
Similar to missing work, leaving the workstation means you are not making the company money. It may not feel like a big deal to you, but the employer must take this problem seriously. If the employer gets on you for leaving the station, the employer is right to do so. Working for money means you plan to do the work asked in order to get the money. You must try to stay at your station unless at break time.

Arriving late for work or leaving early
One problem that comes when Veterans have been in prison, especially when recently released is difficulty controlling their own schedule and being places when needed. There is frequently too many distractions and things that can get in the way. But like the ones above, being late for work or leaving early are areas an employer should have concerns with.

Write down the things that can make you late to work. Then write down how you will avoid those problems.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Getting along with co-workers and supervisors
Let's be honest, you may know how to do the work better than anyone. You may be faster and more accurate. But if no one wants to work with you or be around you, then you are not a good employee. You must get along with coworkers and supervisors. That doesn't mean you have to joke around with coworkers all the time or kiss the boss' butt. But you have to behave in a way that is socially acceptable. Look at it this way, let's say you are 97% accurate in your job and everyone else is 90% accurate. But the way you act makes people not want to come to work or work around you.
You may think this is another person's problem, but it is not. It is your boss' problem. He

or she has to decide if the 7% better you are than others is worth the stress and problems you might cause at work. It is a hard truth, but the answer will almost always be no.

This is often a problem for any employee but especially for those recently released from prison. In prison, you learn to be cautious around others, don't be too friendly, and expect people to try to take advantage of you. Frequently, people project a violent or angry attitude to keep others at a distance. However, these behaviors, though useful in prison, are not useful in most workplaces.

Think about some of the ways that you interact with coworkers or bosses that make them not want to be around you. Write them down and how you plan to fix them. If you can't think of ways, talk to a friend, family member, vocational counselor, or therapist who might be able to point you in the right direction.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Feeling like you are getting the short end of the stick, there are too many nit-picky rules, the pay is poor, or don't like the working conditions
There may be "nit-picky" rules. You might be getting the "short end of the stick". The pay may be bad. You may have a boss that is a jerk. However, DO NOT QUIT THE JOB! It cannot be stated enough, do not quit a job unless you have another one lined up to start. Too many people decide that they do not like a job and quit without having a new job to go to. In general, money is better than no money. Without a job, you can't pay your rent, can't pay for your care or bus passes, and can't pay for food. The chance of being rearrested or becoming homeless goes way up. Also, the chance for restarting substances is also increased. It is easy to say, "this job is making me miserable" and that may be generally correct. But homelessness, jail, and substance use will make you feel even worse. If you do not like a job, find another. It is your right to look. But avoid being impulsive and leaving without having something to go to.

Employer discriminated against me due to legal history
This one is tricky but follow. Let's not pretend. There are some employers who hire desperate people and treat them badly thinking they cannot leave the job. But this is very rare in general. If you are honest about your legal history in the interview and the employer hires you, you can feel pretty good that the employer does want you for your skills. If they want you for your skills, they want to keep you around. Now as we mentioned above, some employers may have some negative views of individuals with felony convictions.
So even though you are hired, you may not be given all the benefits of the doubts other

employees might get. So, you must be sure not to give your employer a reason to treat you badly. Be on time. Get along with others. Do your job. Convince the boss he needs you. Do these things and the employer will not treat you differently.

Substance use, personal problems, emotional problems, low confidence, and difficulty concentrating
All of these should be concerns you bring to your mental health provider. Mental illness is frequently associated with those who have been incarcerated and the effects can last long after leaving prison. Obviously, substance use can have a significant impact on your ability to do your job, be on time, and get to work. But the other areas: emotional problems, low confidence, and difficulty concentrating, may also be signs of a serious mental illness. If you are experiencing these it is best to first talk to your mental health provider to determine if treatment is needed.

One thing that you should consider is that when having difficulties at work, talking to your boss earlier than later is important. The employer does not want to get rid of a good employee. If you begin to have problems, talking to the employer before the problem becomes a disruption to your work is the best way to keep your job.

UNIT FOURTEEN

UNIT FOURTEEN - SUMMARY

Goal: Summarize the findings of this manual.

For what kind of jobs am I going to look?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Where am I going to look?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Do I have a resume? Yes No
If No, create one using the examples provided in Unit 5.

If Yes, who has proofread my resume? _____

What skills am I going to discuss on an application and interview?

Job Related

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Transferable

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Adaptive

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Do I have examples for all my skills? Yes No
If No, return to Unit 3 of the manual and develop some examples.

UNIT FOURTEEN - SUMMARY

List 5 tough questions for which I have developed answers

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____

4. _____

_____

_____

5. _____

_____

_____

What is my answer to "Tell me about yourself"?

_____

_____

_____

What is my closing statement?

_____

_____

_____

UNIT FOURTEEN - SUMMARY

Now that you have completed this manual, you have covered most of the areas that will arise in the job search. The rest is up to you. Keep talking to your contacts. Refer to your list of skills when you complete an application. Review your list of skills, questions, and answers before every interview. When you have an interview, talk to your vocational team before the interview to go over what to focus on and after the interview to identify areas that went well and that need work.

Remember, most of job searching is a numbers game. Do what you can to improve your odds!

SUMMARY SHEET FOR APPLICATIONS

Always keep this in your wallet and use the information when filling out job applications.

Name: _____

Dates of Military Service: _____

Employer: _____ Dates worked: _____

Position: _____ Supervisor's name: _____

Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Brief description of duties:

_____

_____

_____

Employer: _____ Dates worked: _____

Position: _____ Supervisor's name: _____

Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Brief description of duties:

_____

_____

_____

Employer: _____ Dates worked: _____

Position: _____ Supervisor's name: _____

Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Brief description of duties:

_____

_____

_____

Education

Last School attended: _____ Years attended: _____

School City: _____ Degree: _____

Highest Degree: _____

From Where (if different from above): _____

DESCRIBE YOURSELF CHECKLIST

(use with Unit 6-Closing Statement)

A. Adjective (pick 2)
- o Dedicated
- o Dependable
- o Honest
- o Enthusiastic
- o Creative
- o Innovative
- o Conscientious
- o Hard-working
- o _____
- o _____
- o _____

B. Noun (pick 1)
- o Professional (specify if desired)
- o Employee
- o Worker
- o Supervisor
- o Salesperson
- o Customer Service Representative
- o Problem-solver
- o Team-player
- o _____
- o _____
- o _____

C. Action Verb (pick 2)
- o Learns quickly
- o Is attentive to detail
- o Establishes customer loyalty
- o Works hard
- o Develops strong working relationships
- o Develops improved methods
- o Meets all deadlines
- o Solves tough problems
- o Produces quality work
- o Achieves consistent results
- o Motivates others
- o Encourages team efforts
- o Gets along well with others
- o Achieves sales results
- o _____
- o _____
- o _____

To help you create your own summary statement, take the sentence below and plug in the appropriate words from the checklist above.

I am a(an) _____ and _____ _____
(A) (A) (B)

who _____ and _____.
(C) (C)

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs