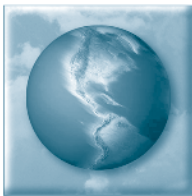


# Lesson 1: Applying for a Job



**Jamal:** I want to find a part-time job but I don't know where to start looking, or how even to apply for a job.

**Mr. Romanchuk:** You're in luck. This lesson will provide you with the tools you need for looking for a job and for applying for the job once you've found it.



A good starting point is the Alberta Learning Information Site or ALIS, as it's more commonly called. It gives information on all aspects of searching and applying for jobs, as well as links to career information and job postings. You can find it at the following address:

<http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca>



To learn more about starting a job search, read the following articles in *Careers*:

- “Looking for a Part-Time or Summer Job?” on page 122 presents tips for getting a job.
- “Finding a Place for Me, Inc.” on page 2 provides an overview of job-seeking strategies in a tough job market.

Businesses and organizations within your community can be valuable sources of information for job-search strategies. Plan to interview—either in-person or by telephone—some individuals who work in businesses or for community organizations. Find out what they consider to be effective job-search strategies. Ask them to share experiences they've had in getting the job they currently have. Ask them to share their perspectives on what they would look for if they had to hire someone for their business or organization.



1. By now, you should have a good understanding of places, things, and people that can serve as resources as you begin searching for a job. You may also already have some personal experience in searching for a job. With a partner, brainstorm a list of ways to search for a job.

**Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

## Developing a Job-Search Tool Kit

What are some steps you can take to pursue any jobs you may be interested in? As you continue to develop your career portfolio, you can build a job-search tool kit as part of it. Your tool kit can help you decide on the job-search strategies that are most appropriate for the type of job you are looking for.



The method you use to search for a job can depend on the kind of job you're looking for. Some job-search strategies are effective if you're looking for seasonal, part-time, or temporary employment. Others are better for looking for a job after you graduate and need to get experience. For example, a part-time, temporary position, such as working in a greenhouse during the summer months, requires a different approach than being hired permanently as a lawyer in a firm.

Strategies—or tools—for your job-search tool kit include the following:

- identifying jobs and contacts
- completing application forms
- writing letters
- creating a résumé and preparing a portfolio
- preparing for an interview

## Identifying Jobs and Contacts

One of the most important tools in your job-search tool kit is the identification of contacts who can help you find out about jobs. This is known as networking. You have already done some networking by interviewing individuals working in community businesses.

Networking means building a support group of people who know you are looking for work, who will keep their ears and eyes open, and who will pass on information concerning job leads.

## Networking

Your own personal contact with people is one way of finding out about jobs and, in some cases, even getting hired. A personal network can include family members, friends, people at school, co-workers, former and present employers, and other personal contacts.



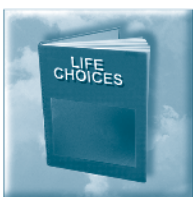
Networking might sound difficult, or even scary. It is not that hard. You can phone people if that is easier for you. Let them know who you are and say you are looking for a job. Tell them the kind of things you can do. Refer to your transferable skills, your interests, and your current involvements. Check to see if they can do any of the following things for you:

- think of any openings they have heard of
- think of anybody who is quitting work, which may create a job opening
- write you a letter of recommendation
- mention to their friends or supervisors that you are looking for work
- think of a few places you could apply for work

Keep in mind that it is important to always be polite and respectful. Don't expect to get hired just because someone knows you. You still have to cultivate a positive impression and present yourself and your work in a courteous manner.

It is important to develop a network. Networking is the only way you can find out about jobs that are never advertised. Networking can get you a job if you have the necessary skills. You should not, however, count on getting a job because of whom you know, but rather hope for a job through networking because a wider group of people see your skills and traits.

To learn more about networking, read “Networking . . . a Contact Sport” on pages 54 and 55 of *Careers*. This article explains the concept of networking and suggests ways to make contacts.



## Finding Job Advertisements

Following are some tips you can use for finding advertised job vacancies:

- Most local, national, and international newspapers advertise available jobs in the classified ads section of the newspaper. In some newspapers, jobs are also advertised in the business section or the careers section, if the paper has these sections. Many of these newspapers can be found online.
- The federal and provincial governments have career centres that post available jobs and provide counsellors to help you find employment.
- Some jobs are posted at career fairs and shows.
- Some businesses advertise job vacancies on their websites.
- Some businesses post job vacancies on bulletin boards at the worksite location.

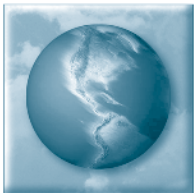


## Using an Employment Agency

There are both government and private employment agencies. These agencies act as go-betweens, both for businesses who are hiring and people who are looking for jobs. Some employment agencies charge fees. Some charge the person looking for a job, others charge the business recruiting a new employee, and others charge both.

## Going Online

You have already explored many online sites that can help you to assess personal interests and skills and to focus on career information and planning. There are also many job-hunting websites that can help job-seekers link up with potential employers. Often these websites include valuable tips on looking for work.



The federal government provides links to a job sites at  
<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/gateways/individuals/cluster/jobs.shtml>

The Government of Alberta provides links to job sites on its ALIS website at  
<http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment/jp/>

There are also a number of website references in your *Careers* textbook. Many sites offering job listings are private, commercial sites and contain advertising. Check to see if there are any costs involved before using a site.

Many companies maintain up-to-date websites about their operations. Current information about a company can be useful when you prepare your application and résumé. Knowing about the company can help you show in the interview that you are motivated and interested in the business.

2. Investigate some of the jobs available in your community that would be suitable for students looking for part-time or summer work. Use at least two of the following strategies:
  - a. Check the want ads in the following sources:
    - newspapers
    - community league newsletters
    - community bulletin boards found in community centres, local businesses, schools, and at post offices
  - b. Make a list of the people in your network whom you could ask about possible job openings. Use the three levels suggested in the article “Networking. . . a Contact Sport.”
    - Level 1: personal friends and relatives
    - Level 2: colleagues and business acquaintances including students and teachers at school
    - Level 3: people you don’t know, but who could help you identify jobs in your community

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

### **Did You Know?**



Eighty-five percent of all jobs are never advertised. How can you gain access to this hidden job market? View Segment 21: Finding Employment on your Student Support CD for information about exploring various ways to identify potential sources of work.

It is important to keep good records while doing a job search. One of the best ways to do this is to create a file folder (hard copy or electronic) with a page for each business being targeted. On this page, list the following:

- the name of the business
- name of the person spoken to
- company address, telephone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and website URL
- each date of contact, along with a brief note about the results of the contact and name of contact person
- information as to whether an application form or résumé has been submitted
- any other important information, such as any interview dates and times

All written communication (photocopies of those sent and any correspondence received) should be kept in a file folder.

Your page or file card may look like the following one.

<b>Business:</b> <i>Yolanda's Garden Centre</i>	<b>Position:</b> <i>Supervisor, U-pick Strawberries</i>
<i>Box 777</i>	<b>Date of Application:</b> <i>Feb. 18</i>
<i>Low Ridge, AB</i>	<b>Date of Interview:</b> <i>Feb. 28</i>
<i>333-6677</i>	<b>Name of Interviewer:</b> <i>Yolanda Sanchez</i>
<b>Possibility of a job:</b> <i>prospects look good—there are also four positions for working with the perennials in the green house</i>	
<b>Materials sent:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>résumé</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>covering letter</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>application form</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>information card</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>thank-you letter</b>	
<b>Competition ends:</b> <i>March 1. She'll call me by March 3.</i>	
<b>Impressions:</b> <i>looks like a busy place—outdoor work—owner is nice, also professional</i>	

<sup>1</sup> Judith Campbell, *Lifechoices: Careers Teacher Resource* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ginn Canada, 1999), 94. Reprinted with permission by Pearson Canada.

## Applying for the Job



Once you have found an appropriate job, you begin the whole process of applying for it. You have already collected in your profiles and portfolios most of the information that will be required throughout the process. Most often, the first step in applying for a job is to complete an application form. Some employers may ask only for a résumé; others may require you to submit both an application form and a résumé.

### Completing Application Forms

An application form provides an opportunity to make a first impression with a potential employer. In general, a potential employer uses an application form to judge the match of the potential employee to the job. Application forms usually ask for some personal information, previous work experience, and educational background.

You have already organized a great deal of personal information for the career portfolio you began in Section 1. Develop a personal information sheet like the one in the next question to include in your portfolio. It is like a short résumé and includes almost all the information that might be asked for on an application form.

3. Following is a template of a Personal Information Sheet used to collect information that may be needed on an application form. Re-create the chart in your notebook or electronic file. (Be sure to allow enough space for your answers.) Fill in all the information on the chart—or as much as you can, depending upon your prior experiences. Save this information in your portfolio. It will assist you when you fill out an application form or create your résumé later on in this lesson.

<b>Personal Information Sheet</b>	
Full name and complete address	
Home telephone, work telephone, fax, e-mail	
Citizenship	
Driver's licence number and type of licence	
Name, address, and telephone number of emergency contact person	
Names and addresses of last three employers and the name and telephone number of a contact person at each place	
The beginning and ending dates of each job and the reason for leaving	
Three references and their telephone numbers and addresses	
Certificate or accreditation numbers of any documentation needed; date of qualification for any special training	
Degrees, diplomas, certificates; dates of graduation from programs; schools/ institutions	
Any special awards or prizes, with the dates they were given	
Last school attended and a school contact person	
Skills that may be of use in the jobs being applied for	
Language spoken and written	
Types of jobs you are interested in	

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**



## Writing Letters



A letter is a tool for marketing yourself to employers. When employers do not have enough time to meet with all the prospective candidates, a letter can make an impression that may lead to an interview or to being hired. There are different types of letters that can be used in a job-search strategy:

- A letter of inquiry is sent even though there has not been a request for applications. It expresses interest in the business and inquires as to whether there are any jobs available. It is sent in the hope that there is some job that has not been advertised or that a job may be opening soon. Often letters will be placed on file in case this happens.
- A letter of application is itself the application for the actual position. It is in answer to an advertisement for a specific job. Once interest has been expressed in a letter of application, the employer will likely request a résumé and/or an interview.
- A covering letter is sent along with an application form or résumé. It must sell your résumé. If the covering letter is not effective, the person hiring may not bother to read the résumé or application. (Covering letters are also referred to as *cover letters*.)
- A follow-up letter is sent after you've interacted with the potential employer. For example, a thank-you letter should be sent after being given an interview, receiving information, job shadowing someone, or being given a tour.

A letter can also be used for various other purposes such as networking or accepting a position that has been offered.

When writing a letter for a job search or application, use this three-paragraph format:

- **First paragraph:** State the position being applied for and the purpose for writing the letter. Explain where the information on the job came from. Get the attention of the employer. Look professional and get to the point.
- **Second paragraph:** Explain very briefly why you are capable of filling the position. Refer to the résumé if you have included one. Briefly mention your most important education and work experience and how they relate to the job.
- **Third paragraph:** Ask for an interview and give a general indication of when you are available. Indicate your enthusiasm and willingness to work. Be sure to include contact telephone numbers.

Keep copies of letters and advertisements in your job-search files. Make sure your letter looks professional by doing the following:

- Use regular white paper. Do not use coloured paper, recycled-on-one-side paper, or cute stationery.
- Use business style.
- Use a professional tone. It should be self-confident and respectful of the employer. It should not sound boastful. (**Note:** Many of the employment websites provide letter templates and hints for wording job-search letters.)
- Use word processing. Proofread carefully to ensure there are no grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors.
- Use good-quality photocopies. Make letters look professional.



The following articles in *Careers* have helpful advice on writing covering letters:

- “Making the Shortlist with a Concise, Quality Covering Letter” on page 87 discusses the importance of concise, good-quality covering letters.
  - “Use the Phone to Find a Name” on page 17 provides a brief explanation about using the telephone to gather information for an accurate covering letter.
4. From a newspaper or website ad, choose a job that interests you. Outline the information you would include in each of the three paragraphs of a letter of application. **Note:** You do not need to write the actual letter.

**Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

## Creating a Résumé and Preparing a Portfolio

A résumé is one of the most important tools in a job search. Most job ads ask you to submit a résumé. Not all résumés will be read, so it is extremely important to make the résumé interesting, appealing, and professional.



You want to make your résumé compelling enough that the hiring person will include you on the short list of people who will get interviews.



To learn about how clear communication contributes to employability, view Segment 22: A Résumé and Covering Letter on your Student Support CD.



The following articles in *Careers* also provide tips for writing effective résumés:

- “Writing Effective Résumés” on pages 64 to 66 describes chronological, functional, and combination forms of résumés. It also provides some general guidelines for information to include in a résumé.
- “Your Résumé: Write It Right!” on page 23 provides a sample combination form of résumé for a high school student with some previous part-time and seasonal work experience.
- “Job References: Tough for Everyone” on pages 68 and 69 gives some ideas on how to obtain and use good job references.

Frequently employers ask that applications and résumés be completed and forwarded online. “The Online Job Application: Preparing Your Résumé for the Internet” on pages 120 to 122 of *Careers* provides guidelines for writing a suitable online résumé.

5. Review your personal profile and other information you have gathered about yourself in this module. Using this information about your personal skills, create a list of action words and phrases to describe yourself in your résumé.

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

## Preparing A Presentation Portfolio

One of the primary purposes of developing a career portfolio is to use it for job applications. You won't necessarily be mailing the whole thing out with your application. A résumé and a covering letter will usually suffice. While some employers will request a complete portfolio, most often you will need to select the most appropriate information from your portfolio to include in your résumé.

If a full portfolio is required, you can develop a presentation portfolio from the materials you have in your career portfolio. The materials you select for a presentation portfolio will depend on the audience you are presenting to. It could be a one-on-one interview situation; it could also be for a panel of people. The format you use for your presentation will depend upon the type of materials selected. Usually a small binder or folder will work well.

A presentation portfolio should be developed with a specific purpose and situation in mind. This means that its format will always be changing. For example, preparing a presentation portfolio for an interview for a summer job working with young children will require different pieces and samples than a presentation portfolio used in an interview for an internship at a research laboratory.



You will learn to develop a presentation portfolio for a variety of purposes. For example, interviews for employment, post-secondary program applications, or scholarship applications all require slightly different versions of your portfolio. As you can probably already tell, your portfolio needs to be flexible and versatile.

6. Make a list of the items from your career portfolio that you could use to prepare a presentation portfolio.

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**



**Mr. Romanchuk:** You've sent off your résumé to a potential employer. It's compelling enough that you've made the short list of people who will get interviews. What's your next step?

**Ashley:** I'll need to find out what to do to get ready for an interview.

## Preparing for an Interview

Getting to the interview stage in the job-search process is a great accomplishment. Often the employer has résumés from more applicants than can be interviewed. Therefore a short list of those who seem strongest based on their résumé and references will be the ones who are interviewed and actually considered for the job.

An interview fulfills several functions. The employer uses it to determine if you have the skills, knowledge, and characteristics necessary for the job being offered. The employer is also trying to communicate some idea about the company and to get a sense of whether you will be a good fit. The interview gives you a chance to create a positive impression, as well as find out whether the institution is a desirable place for you to work.

Preparing for an interview is necessary for the following reasons:

- First, the interview itself will be relatively short. Most interviews don't last for more than an hour. Well-practised answers allow you to use that time as efficiently as possible to let the interviewer know how suitable you are for the position.
- Second, preparation will decrease your nervousness. Rehearsing will also help you make a better, more confident impression.

Following are some sample interview questions. Preparing good answers for them will reduce much of your anxiety prior to the interview.

- Tell me a bit about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this field/line of work?
- Why did you apply for this job?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What interests you in our product/service/business?
- What position are you most interested in?
- Have you any experience in this type of work?
- Are you willing to work your way up to the job you would like to do?
- Why should we choose you as the successful applicant?
- Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?
- What three words describe you the best?
- What are your strengths?
- What would your last boss say is your greatest strength?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What would your last boss say is an area in which you need improvement?
- What subjects did you enjoy at school?
- How does your education relate to this job?
- How do you spend your spare time?
- What jobs in the past have you enjoyed doing the most? Why?
- What jobs in the past have you enjoyed doing the least? Why?
- Tell me about a work accomplishment you are most proud of.
- What is the most difficult task at work you have had to handle? What happened?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?

- Can you tell me about a time that you successfully managed/organized a project?
- What computer programs do you know?
- Why did you leave your last employer?
- Why do you want to leave your present job?
- Were you absent much from your last job?
- Do you work well under pressure?
- Can you tell me some ways that you handle stress on the job?
- Describe some time when you had to motivate other people to get a job done.
- How do you get along with co-workers?
- How would your co-workers describe you?
- Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?
- What type of boss do you prefer to work with?
- What are your career plans? What are your long-term goals?
- How does this job fit with your career plans?
- Where do you see yourself in three/five/ten years?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- What hours can you work?
- What times of day or evening can you work?
- What days can you work?
- How long are you planning to stay in this job?
- What are your expectations regarding salary?
- Are you applying for other jobs?
- Do you have any questions?

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Campbell, *Lifechoices: Careers Teacher Resource* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ginn Canada, 1999), BLM #6. Reprinted with permission by Pearson Canada.

Before going into an interview, it is important to research the company. You can look at the organization's website or ask people who know about the organization. Use the information you find to jot down a few questions and take them to your interview. Researching can help you ask questions that show you are truly interested and willing to put time into learning about the organization. Doing your homework is part of impressing your interviewer!



To learn more about interviews, read the following articles in *Careers*. They will be useful for answering the next question.

- “How to Interview Effectively” on pages 80 to 82 points out that the skills for being interviewed can be improved with practice. Researching and learning about the company or business before having the interview are also keys to success.
- “How to Ace a Job Interview” on pages 78 and 79 is a very detailed look at interviews. Possible interview questions are categorized into groups. The article also gives some interview tips and guidelines.
- “Preparing for Tomorrow’s Interview” on pages 76 and 77 suggests six ways to prepare for an interview.
- “The Telephone Interview” on pages 83 to 85 provides advice on how to handle a telephone interview.
- “Fashionably Yours” on page 77 discusses dressing for an interview.



7. Consider what you've learned about interviews. Select ten questions from the list of sample interview questions. Choose different kinds of questions for the list; choose some that you find easy to answer and some that you find challenging to answer. Respond in writing to each one.

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**



There are valuable people resources in your community who can help you practise interview and job-search skills. Actually participating in an interview is a worthwhile experience that will help you develop your skills. Ask a community member such as a business owner, community volunteer, manager, community-league member, agency recruiter, or a human-resources representative about the types of questions he or she would ask a potential employee or volunteer. Ask the person if he or she would be willing to interview you, using some of these questions. Ask for feedback once the interview is completed. Alternatively, practise the skills of telephone interviewing with a friend or an adult.

Go to page 6 of Assignment Booklet 3B and respond to questions 1 and 2 of Section 4.

## Looking Back; Looking Ahead

In this lesson you developed a job-search tool kit. You acquired strategies for identifying jobs and contacts, completing application forms, writing letters and résumés, and preparing for an interview. In the next lesson you will examine employer and employee expectations.

## Suggested Answers

1. Your list of ways to search for a job will vary, depending on your experiences, your resources, and your community. Your list may include strategies such as the following:
  - walking from door-to-door
  - completing application forms on-site
  - searching through job sites on the Internet
  - using the newspaper to identify jobs in the community
  - using a résumé
  - telephoning businesses
  - using an employment agency
  - submitting a résumé online
2. **a. and b.** The potential jobs that you identify in your job search will vary, depending on your interests, the types of businesses and opportunities for student work in your community, and the job-search strategies you select. Which strategies did you use?
  - checking the want ads
  - making a list of people in your network
  - contacting potential employers
  - checking bulletin boards within a business
  - watching for Help Wanted signs in windows of businesses
3. Personal information sheets will vary, depending on your experiences, skills, and interests. Have you included as much information as possible? Ensure that you have included all your work experience, such as part-time jobs, babysitting, volunteer experience, or informal work you have done in your community. Also, ensure that you have permission from three references you can use. Remember that this sheet is for your own use and does not have to be shared with potential employers. It provides a databank of information that you can use and refer to as you fill out application forms.
4. The information you include in your letter outline will vary according to the ad you are responding to and your skills, experience, and training. Your first paragraph should include the job being applied for and where you saw the ad. The second paragraph is where you sell yourself by indicating your relevant strengths, skills, abilities, experience, and education. Refer to your résumé, if included. The third paragraph should indicate your availability for an interview and contact numbers. End with expressions of enthusiasm for the job.
5. Do the words you've chosen accurately describe you? While you want the language you use in your résumé to present a positive image of yourself, you also want it to be honest.
6. The items you select will depend on the specific skills and strengths that you want your presentation portfolio to represent.

You need to be well prepared for any presentation. The following checklist can be a starting point.

<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you want to accomplish?</li> <li>• What do you expect from your audience? Do you know their names? Their positions?</li> <li>• What do you know about their interests and expectations?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Messages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What two or three key messages do you want the audience to learn?</li> <li>• Which messages will likely have the most impact on the audience?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which items from your portfolio effectively demonstrate your key messages/strengths?</li> <li>• Do they need updating?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will you use any technology/props in your presentation?</li> <li>• If the technology fails, what is your back-up plan?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Timing/sequence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time is available?</li> <li>• Will the audience have questions? Which questions might be asked?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you assess the impact and effectiveness of the presentation—by doing a personal assessment, or by asking for audience feedback?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will you take? What will you wear? How will you get there?</li> <li>• What can you do to relieve stress?</li> </ul>

7. The answers you develop will depend on the questions you select from the list of possible interview questions. Hopefully you selected different kinds of questions from this list—some that were easy to answer and others that were challenging to answer. Practise saying your answers out loud, and plan to share the questions and answers with a friend, parent, or interested adult. Review and revise your answers based on their feedback.

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