

# Work Search Basics

Identify your skills

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Find job opportunities

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Write a strong resumé

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Succeed in interviews

**alis**

Alberta

# Career Practitioners

*Work Search Basics* is for people who are looking for their first job or who have been in the workforce but have limited experience searching for work. It helps them to do the following:

- identify their skills and accomplishments
- research occupations
- explore the skills used to find work—networking, gathering information and interviewing
- explore the tools used to find work—resumés, cover letters, portfolios and applications
- identify ways to stay positive and handle rejection
- connect with further information and resources

Job seekers with more work search experience or post-secondary education should refer to the publication *Advanced Techniques for Work Search*. It provides more in-depth information and exercises on identifying skills, using the Internet to search for work, developing a resumé, gathering information and preparing for an interview.

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Information in this publication was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. However, legislation, labour market information, websites and programs are subject to change, and we encourage you to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education, employment and business decisions.

The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

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# Is This Book for You?



*Work Search Basics* is a step-by-step guide to help you find work. Maybe you are looking for your first job or your first job in Canada. Or maybe you have considerable work experience, but you haven't looked for a job in a long time. This guide will show you how to identify your skills, target your work search, write resumés and cover letters, practise interview skills and stay positive during your work search.

If you have experience searching for work or have post-secondary education or training in your desired field, you may be more interested in *Advanced Techniques for Work Search*. If you were educated outside Canada, you can also consult *Working in Alberta: A Guide for Internationally Trained and Educated Immigrants*. These guides are designed to help you improve your work search strategies. Both are available at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications).

## Key terms

People often use the words **work**, **job**, **occupation** and **career** to mean the same thing, but they have different definitions.

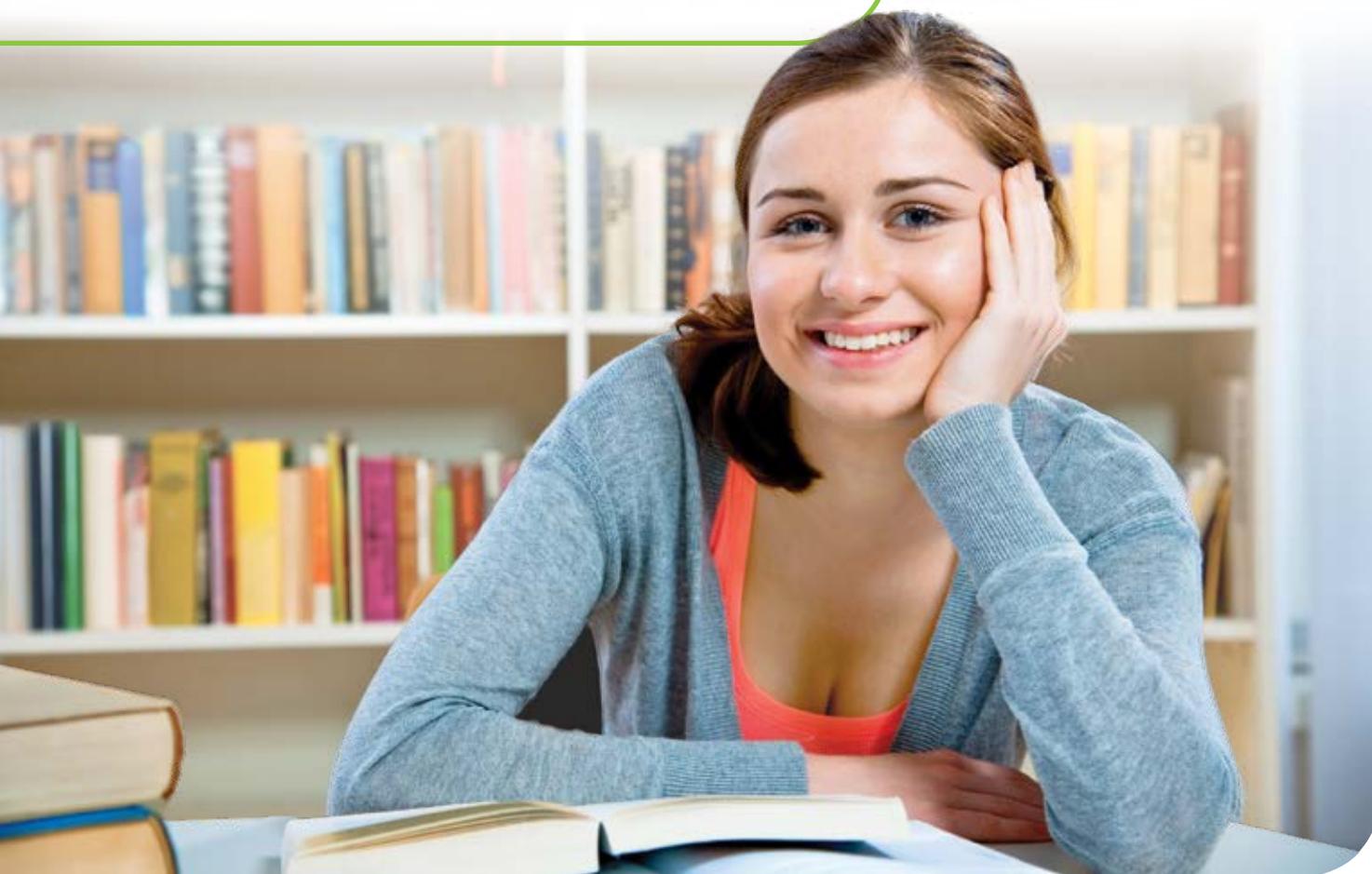
**Work:** Work is an activity with specific goals. It does not have to be paid employment. Volunteering and things you do to contribute to your household are also types of work.

**Job:** A job is a position with clearly defined duties. An example of a job would be *Grade 7 language arts teacher at Louis St. Laurent School*.

**Occupation:** An occupation is a category of jobs that share the same basic skills and knowledge. An example of an occupation would be *teacher*.

**Career:** A career includes all of a person's life experience. It includes work, education, hobbies and family activities.

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# Preparing for Your Work Search



**Your work search will be more efficient if you gather what you need and know what kind of work you're looking for before you begin.**

This section will help you

- get organized
- identify your skills and accomplishments
- identify what you want and need in a job
- research types of occupations

# Get organized

Getting organized means making sure you have all the things you will need to find and start work as soon as possible.

## Equipment and supplies

If possible, find a place where you can keep all the things you'll need:

- a computer with a printer and access to the Internet
- a phone with voice mail
- a desk or table with good lighting
- office supplies, such as pens, paper, envelopes and a stapler
- this book

If you don't have easy access to a computer, find out where you can use one in your community. Most communities in Alberta have public computers available. Try a public library, an educational institution (for example, a high school or college) or an Alberta Supports Centre. Visit [alis.alberta.ca/asc](https://alis.alberta.ca/asc) to find the nearest Alberta Supports Centre, or call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992.

Whether your work search area is a whole room or a tabletop, try to keep it as organized and pleasant to return to as possible.

## Email account

You will need an email account that you can use for your work search. If you already have a job, it's not a good idea to use your current work email for this purpose. Choose an email address that is some version of your name, like Firstname.Lastname@provider.ca. Avoid email addresses that don't communicate a professional image.

For more information on setting up a work search email account, see [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/email-account](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/email-account).

## Voice mail

If you have voice mail, record a message that is clear and professional. If other people might pick up your phone, let them know that you may be receiving business calls. Ask them to respond politely and take down a clear message for you.

## Social Insurance Number (SIN)

To work in Canada, you must have a Social Insurance Number (SIN). A SIN is a nine-digit number that is a unique identifier. If you don't already have a SIN, you will need to get one from Service Canada.

For more information on obtaining a Social Insurance Number, visit [canada.ca](https://canada.ca). Search for "social insurance number" in the search box.

# Identify what you have to offer

Identifying your skills and accomplishments at the beginning of your work search is useful because it can help you figure out what kind of work you'll be good at. You'll also need this information later when you're writing your resumé and preparing for job interviews.

One of the best ways to show employers that you have the skills they are looking for is to describe situations in which you have used those skills. For example, describing situations in which you have shown you can work well with others is much more convincing than simply calling yourself a "team player."

## Work-specific skills

Work-specific skills are technical skills you use to do a particular job. Driving a forklift, operating a cash register and arranging flowers are examples of work-specific skills.

Think about the work you have done before, whether paid or unpaid, and the tasks involved in that work. Have a look at the examples of tasks and skills shown below. Then write the tasks you have done in the space provided on page 7. Beside each task, list the skills you needed to complete that task.

If you're not sure which skills to list, here are some places to look for ideas:

- occupational profiles at [alis.alberta.ca/occinfo](http://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo)
- resumé books
- job ads online or in the newspaper
- your previous job description (if you have one)

## Volunteering

**Do you lack work experience?  
Consider doing volunteer work.**

It's a great way to gain experience and develop the skills employers are looking for. Volunteering can help you expand your network, check out an occupation or industry and build your confidence. (To find volunteer opportunities in your community, visit the Go Volunteer website at [govolunteer.ca](http://govolunteer.ca). For more information go to [alis.alberta.ca/volunteering](http://alis.alberta.ca/volunteering).)

## Examples

Task	Work-specific skill(s) involved
Repair auto bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use frame machines to straighten bent frames</li> <li>- Remove badly damaged sections of vehicles</li> <li>- Weld torn metal</li> <li>- Work out minor damage in panels, fenders and trim</li> </ul>
Yard maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use lawn mower</li> <li>- Use weed whacker</li> <li>- Identify and dig weeds</li> <li>- Water and fertilize plants</li> </ul>

## Worksheet: My work-specific skills

Task	Work-specific skill(s) involved

## Employability skills

Employability skills are more general skills that can help you succeed in most work situations. They include skills that let you work well with others, communicate, work with numbers, solve problems, be responsible and work safely.

Read through the examples of general employability skills below. Then, in the space provided on page 9, write down as many of your own employability skills as you can. List any skill that you are able to perform as well as most people. You don't have to be an expert at something to add it to the list.

If you're not sure which skills to put on your list, these resources will give you some ideas:

- the *Abilities Exercise* and the *Significant Experiences Exercise* available under the *Know Yourself* tab at [careerinsite.alberta.ca](http://careerinsite.alberta.ca)
- the publication *Assessing You: The First Step in Career Planning*, available at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications)
- the publication *Workability: What You Need to Get and Keep a Job*, available at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications)

Beside each skill you list, describe how you have used that skill in the past. Be specific. What needed doing and why? Where did you do it and when? How did you contribute if it was a teamwork situation?

For more help with identifying your skills, go to [alis.alberta.ca/market-your-employability-skills](http://alis.alberta.ca/market-your-employability-skills).

### Examples

Employability skill(s)	When/how skill(s) were used
Co-operating with others	- When working with classmates on a team science project, I suggested that we take turns setting up experiments and recording results. That way, everyone contributed equally and got to do both tasks.
Estimating, budgeting and tracking finances	- I manage the family budget to make sure that we are able to cover our basic expenses and still enjoy a vacation together each year.

## Worksheet: My employability skills

Employability skill(s)	When/how skill(s) were used

## Accomplishments

Employers will be even more impressed by your skills if you describe the positive results you have achieved. Accomplishments are the successes you have had, large or small, in completing activities or meeting goals. They can be work related, or they can be successes you've had in other parts of your life, such as at home, at school or in your community. You will want to focus on your accomplishments in your resumés and cover letters, as well as in job interviews.

For example, describe what happened after you took responsibility for a task, or how other people's behaviour changed as a result of your efforts to motivate them. Or tell employers about an award you received for good attendance or a good safety record. Better yet, show them the award or other evidence.

What have you done that makes you proud? See the examples of accomplishments shown below. Then list your own accomplishments in the space provided on page 11.

Here are some types of accomplishments:

- goals you have met or exceeded
- times you've taken on more responsibility than you had to
- tight deadlines you've met
- activities or events you've organized
- achievements or recognition in school or training
- leadership roles you've been asked to take on
- awards
- bonuses

Sometimes you might not even know when you do something that other people think is important. Ask your family and friends to describe your accomplishments—you might be surprised by some of the things they come up with.

For an exercise to help you identify your skills and accomplishments, go to [alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite/know-yourself/skills-quiz](https://alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite/know-yourself/skills-quiz).

## Examples

### My accomplishments

- Achieved honours standing (above 80%) in four of my classes
- Promoted to foreman of road construction crew after only two months
- Organized an office fundraiser that earned \$550 for a local charity

## Worksheet: My accomplishments

My accomplishments

# Identify your needs and wants

Now that you have identified what you have to offer, think about what *you* need and want in a job. Some of the things may be very important to you, while others may just be nice to have. If you have to decide between job options, keeping your values and preferences in mind will help you choose the job that is the best fit for you.

Think about these factors:

- **Time commitment.** Are you looking for part-time or full-time work? Are you available to work evenings and weekends? During weekdays? Only during the summer?
- **Location.** Where does the job site need to be for you to get to it easily?
- **Job security.** How important is it to have a job you know is secure for the long term?
- **Size of the organization.** Would you like to work for a large corporation? A small family-run business? Something in between?
- **Working alone or with others.** Do you prefer to work by yourself or as part of a team?

- **Variety of the work.** Do you feel most comfortable with familiar, routine tasks? Or do you get bored if a job is repetitive?
- **Opportunities to learn or advance.** How important is it to learn new things on the job? Would you like a chance to be promoted within the organization?

Do you need more help identifying your needs, values and preferences? Look at the following resources:

- [alis.alberta.ca/work-values](http://alis.alberta.ca/work-values)
- the quizzes in *Know Yourself* at [alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite](http://alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite) (click *Sign Up* to create a free profile and to save your quiz results on your interests and abilities, work values, preferred working conditions and more)



# Research occupations

If you're not sure which occupations are a good fit for your skills and needs, you'll want to do some research to help you figure out what your options are. That way, you'll be able to focus your work search on the most promising opportunities. To learn about work options, you can read print materials, use online resources and talk to people with first-hand knowledge.

Even if you already know exactly what kind of work you're looking for, you may want to check up-to-date information on topics like qualifications and average wages before you contact employers.

## Online and print resources

Here are some resources that can help you learn about different occupations:

- **OCCinfo**—Find information on occupations, educational programs and schools in Alberta. Learn about Alberta's employment outlook and advancement, find information about job duties and working conditions, discover educational and certification requirements, and look up wage and salary ranges. (Go to [alis.alberta.ca/occinfo](http://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo).)
- **CAREERinsite**—Log in and build a career plan on this website. Explore work options and make decisions so you can move toward your goals. (Go to [alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite](http://alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite).)
- **Occupational videos**—Learn about the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to work in a specific occupation from video clips showing real people in real jobs. (Go to [alis.alberta.ca/occvideo](http://alis.alberta.ca/occvideo).)

- **Alberta Supports Centres**—Alberta Supports Centres have many electronic and print resources to help you learn about career options and make decisions. (To find the centre nearest you, go to [alis.alberta.ca/asc](http://alis.alberta.ca/asc) or call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992.)
- **Your local library**—You can find a lot of information about occupations in the reference, periodicals and non-fiction sections of your local library. Try checking business magazines, newspaper articles and industry directories.

## Information interviewing

Gather information by interviewing people who work in fields, jobs or places that interest you. Ask how they found work and where they suggest you should look for work. It is not asking people for a job! If they do happen to have a job opening and are in a position to hire you, they will probably tell you. Then you can decide whether to pursue the opportunity.

Prepare for each interview by listing the questions you want to ask. Before you meet with anyone, do some Internet or library research. The more you learn about work in your fields of interest, the more specific your questions will become.

Most people will have a limited amount of time to talk with you. Plan to ask your most important questions first and make your questions as brief as possible. Be businesslike and don't take more than 15 to 20 minutes of someone's time.

## Questions to ask during the information interview

- How did you find work in this occupation? People love to talk about themselves, so this question is usually a good conversation opener. But don't spend too much time on it or you won't have time to ask other questions.
- How are people usually recruited, and what work search methods are best? Should I contact employers by dropping in, phoning, sending an email message or writing a letter?
- What is most challenging in this occupation? What is most rewarding? What are the current hot topics?
- Where would a person with my background and skills fit in?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend I talk to?

For more help thinking of questions for your information interview, see the section **Deciding what questions to ask** in *Advanced Techniques for Work Search*, available at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications).

## Following up on the information interview

Take notes. When you have conducted a number of information interviews, it can be difficult to remember specifics like names and phone numbers. During or immediately after each interview, write down the following information:

- date
- name, phone number and email address of the person you talked to
- what you learned from the person
- the names and phone numbers of any referrals

Within a day or two, write a brief note thanking the person for his or her time and help.

Follow up each information interview by phoning two to three weeks later. A contact may have heard about work opportunities in the meantime or thought of something else that might help you.

For more suggestions on information interviewing, go to [alis.alberta.ca/information-interviews](http://alis.alberta.ca/information-interviews).

# Finding Work



**Finding job opportunities takes detective work. Most opportunities are not advertised. It is easier for employers to wait for a job seeker to come to them or ask the people they know to recommend someone who is looking for work.**

This section provides information on

- where and how you can look for opportunities
- where and how to network
- contacting employers directly
- planning and keeping track of your work search activities

# Looking for opportunities

There are many ways to find employers who need your skills:

- Network in person by talking to friends and acquaintances.
- Network online through email, blogs and social and professional networking sites.
- Contact employers directly and ask about job openings.
- Look at the career sections of company websites.
- Use job search engines and job search websites at [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/find-work/work-search-online/job-search-engines](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/find-work/work-search-online/job-search-engines).
- Check online job banks. (Go to [alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings](https://alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings) for a list of federal, provincial and regional job banks, Alberta newspaper postings and more.)
- Attend workshops, career and job fairs and other learning opportunities. Go to Career Events at [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/career-events](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/career-events).
- Use social networking sites to check for job postings.
- Watch for “Now Hiring” signs in the windows of local businesses.
- Read the advertisements in the classified and career sections of local newspapers.
- Register with private employment or placement agencies.
- Pay attention to news reports about new projects and think about the types of work that may become available and where.

The best ways to tap into the “hidden job market” are talking to people (or networking) and contacting employers directly.

## Under certain circumstances?

If you are a job seeker with a disability, go to [alis.alberta.ca/persons-with-disabilities](https://alis.alberta.ca/persons-with-disabilities). If you have a criminal record, go to [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/finding-work-with-a-criminal-record](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/finding-work-with-a-criminal-record).

## Internships

Are you a student or graduate wanting work experience? Consider an internship, which is paid or unpaid on-the-job training where you can learn valuable job skills in a workplace setting. Search for employers who offer internship programs at [alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings](https://alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings). For more information on student and graduate programs with the Government of Alberta, go to [alberta.ca/internships-student-employment](https://alberta.ca/internships-student-employment).



# Networking

Networking is an organized way of asking the people you know for information and to connect you with the people they know. It lets you form a “net” of personal contacts who can provide support and information about careers and job opportunities.

## Networking in person

Start with the people you know best: friends and family, neighbours, former teachers and mentors or work supervisors. But don't stop there—talk to everyone you know! Your hairstylist's brother may do work that interests you. You'll never know until you ask.

People whose work involves a lot of contact with other people can be particularly helpful. If you know any teachers, social workers, religious leaders or community leaders, for example, talk to them about your skills and work search targets.

Start networking by making a list of people you know and deciding which ones to contact first. Then tell those people that you're looking for information and job opportunities. Tell them a bit about your training and experience and the type of work you're looking for. Ask them to let you know if they hear about any job leads or to refer you to someone who might know of something.

You can also network in a more formal setting. Form direct connections through activities and events associated with the type of work you want to do. These might include workshops and conferences, industry association events and clubs, union events and volunteer work.

## Networking online

The Internet offers many opportunities to connect with people you might not otherwise have a chance to communicate with. Here are some ways you can network online:

- **Email.** Email is a convenient way to contact people you know, as well as other people in fields that interest you whose contact information is public.
- **Professional networking sites.** Sites such as LinkedIn let you make business-focused connections with the people you know and the people they know. You can also participate in discussion groups on work-related topics.
- **Social networking sites.** Sites such as Facebook let you tell your network of social connections that you are looking for work. If you use Facebook to look for work, always present yourself in a professional manner.
- **Blogs and discussion groups in your field.** Following blogs and “mini-blogs” such as Twitter can help you stay up to date on the industries you're interested in. You may also meet people who work in those industries.
- **Your own blog, website or Twitter account.** You can use your own website to post your resumé. You can also use Twitter or a blog to advertise your work search and participate in conversations about topics related to the work you would like to do. Always keep it professional!

For more information on networking, visit [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/networking](http://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/networking).

# Contacting employers directly

Once you have identified employers you would like to work for, contact them whether or not they have posted a job. Remember, positions often aren't posted.

Contacting employers to get a job interview is not the same thing as information interviewing. This time, your objective is to convince employers that they should hire you.

## Choose a contact method

You can contact employers in person, over the phone, by email or by regular mail. When you are deciding which method(s) to use, consider your personality and communication skills. Also think about which method will work best for presenting your qualifications.

For example, if you usually make a good first impression when you meet people, contact employers in person. If you sound pleasant and confident on the phone (or could with practice), call employers. If you can write a dynamite business letter or email message, contact employers in writing.

If your work history has gaps in it that are difficult to explain briefly or in a positive way, contact employers in person or by phone. Doing so is probably better than sending email or letters. On the other hand, if your qualifications look really good on paper, a well-written cover letter and resumé (or email) may get better results.

If you are applying for work in a community some distance away from where you live, you may not be able to drop in on employers or make lots of phone calls. You may have to rely primarily on email or letters.

## Identify the person to contact

“Dear Sir/Madam” and “To whom it may concern” approaches are not very effective. No matter what

method of contact you use—in person, by phone, by email or by regular mail—address a specific person:

- If you are contacting employers in person, call before you go and ask who does the hiring for the type of work you want. Find out when this person may be available to speak to applicants or whether you can make an appointment. When you walk in, ask for the person by name.
- If you are contacting employers by phone, ask the person who answers the phone for the name of the person who does the hiring. Either ask to be put through to that person or call back another day and ask for him or her by name.
- If you are contacting employers by letter or email, address your messages to specific people. You may be able to find the names and addresses of company executives by checking company websites or by networking (if calling the company is not practical).

Record names and contact information in an organized way. Give yourself room for notes about when you contacted people and how they responded. You will need this information to follow up later. See page 21 for a worksheet you can use to keep notes.

### **Bigger is not always better!**

**In your work search, don't overlook organizations with fewer than 20 employees.**

Small businesses create more new jobs than large businesses. Another advantage of contacting small businesses is that it may be easier to get through to the person who can hire you. In fact, it may be the owner who answers the phone.

## Methods of Contacting Employers—Advantages and Disadvantages

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>In person</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is most effective if you are looking for unskilled, semi-skilled or sales-related work</li> <li>• impresses employers who are looking for outgoing people</li> <li>• can create good first impressions by your appearance and manner, regardless of your qualifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires self-confidence</li> <li>• is time-consuming</li> <li>• may require spending money on transportation</li> <li>• may bother employers who prefer to meet by appointment</li> </ul>
<b>By phone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lets you contact many employers in a short time</li> <li>• is harder to ignore than an email or letter</li> <li>• can be effective for most types of work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires good phone skills</li> <li>• gives you less than a minute to convince an employer to talk to you</li> </ul>
<b>By email</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emphasizes good qualifications</li> <li>• is faster than and doesn't cost as much as mail or long distance calls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• must be well written</li> <li>• requires you to check your email often for responses</li> </ul>
<b>By mail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emphasizes good qualifications</li> <li>• may impress employers more than email because it requires more effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a low response rate (5 to 10 per cent of employers)</li> <li>• is not as effective in competitive fields</li> <li>• is time-consuming</li> <li>• must be well written</li> <li>• costs money for supplies and postage</li> </ul>

### Follow up

Follow up your contact with an employer after a reasonable length of time (about two weeks).

Be *gently* persistent. Here are some suggestions:

- If you meet employers in person and they have no openings, leave a resumé anyway. Ask whether and when you can check in with them again.
- On the phone, your goal is to get a job interview. After a meeting, leave a resumé and ask whether you can call back in a couple of weeks.
- When you contact employers by mail or email, ask for an interview in your closing paragraph. If possible, give a date and time when you will phone to arrange a convenient time. Then call when you said you would!

## Create a work search plan and record

Putting a work search plan in writing will help you set goals and deadlines for your search. It will also help you keep track of what you have done. Be specific about what you will do, who you will contact and when you will complete each activity.

The amount of time you spend on work search activities should reflect your priorities. For example, if networking is your number one method, then most of your work search day should be spent networking.

To avoid feeling overwhelmed, set manageable tasks. If you can't do anything on the list in less than half an hour, break it into smaller tasks. Keep adding to your plan as your search progresses.

Have a look at the sample work search plan below. Then use the worksheet on page 21 to create your own plan. Describe the activities you

plan to complete and set a deadline for each. If the activity involves contacting someone, write down that person's name and contact details. When you have completed an activity, record the date and the results of that activity.

Here are some examples of activities you may want to include in your plan:

- preparing resumés and cover letters
- networking and information interviewing
- contacting and following up with employers
- checking job postings on the Internet
- answering job ads in the newspaper
- registering with employment agencies
- attending workshops and job fairs
- attending interviews

### Sample work search plan and record

Activity	Deadline	Date completed	Results of activity
Attend networking evening	February 17	February 17	- Deb Chen, ABC Organization, said to contact Fatima Rai at XYZ Company
Search job ads in the newspaper and at <a href="http://alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings">alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings</a>	February 19	February 17	- Found ad for receptionist at Jim's Garage
Contact Fatima Rai at XYZ Company by phone (780-000-0000)	February 20	February 19	- No positions currently available, but Fatima said to try again in about a month
Respond to ad for job at Jim's Garage	February 20	February 19	- Sent resumé/cover letter, invited for interview
Interview with Jim Fields at Jim's Garage	February 24		
Follow up with Fatima Rai (780-000-0000)	March 20		



# Resumés



**Most employers will expect you to have a resumé. A resumé is a one- or two-page summary of your qualifications. The purpose of a resumé is to quickly draw an employer’s attention to your most relevant skills and accomplishments. It is a tool designed to get you invited for an interview. It should be short, interesting to look at and easy to read.**

**This section covers**

- information to put on your resumé
- tips on writing your resumé
- creating a resumé master
- different resumé types
- plain text resúms

# Information to include

The information that you put on your resumé will depend on your background and experience and the job you are applying for. It will include some or all of the following components:

- **Name and contact information.** Mailing address, email address and phone number. You can also include your website if it's relevant and appropriate for an employer to see.
- **Objective.** A job objective statement briefly states the type of work you want. Don't include a job objective statement if your goal is obvious or can be stated in a cover letter.
- **Education and training.** School name, program (certificate, diploma), major areas of study or training, year graduated or credits earned. If you're still at school, you can write "in progress" or "estimated completion date" instead of a graduation date.
- **Work history or experience.** Job titles and descriptions, employers, dates of employment, responsibilities. You can include both paid and volunteer experience. Try to be specific. Use facts, not terms that are broad or general.
- **Skills.** Work-specific or employability skills not mentioned in the work history or experience section. If possible, use statements that give examples or evidence of those skills.
- **Languages.** Languages you can speak, read, or write, along with fluency level (fluent, conversational, basic).
- **Awards and honours.** Recognition you have received in school, on the job or in your community.
- **School projects.** In-class or extracurricular school projects that show your skills or initiative.

- **activities, hobbies and interests.** If you don't have work experience related to the job but your leisure activities, hobbies or interests involve relevant skills or knowledge, you may want to mention them to flesh out your resumé.
- **volunteer activities and community involvement.** List the volunteer activities and organizations (community, cultural, professional, social) you are or have been involved in, if you think they might be of interest to a particular employer. Including this information in your resumé can show employers that you are a well-rounded person. But use your judgment and avoid identifying your religious or political memberships.

For more ideas on experiences to include in your resume, go to [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/put-your-experience-to-work](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/put-your-experience-to-work).

## References available upon request?

**You don't need to include the line "References available upon request" on your resumé.**

List your references on a separate piece of paper and take it with you when you go to an interview. For more information on references and a sample reference list, see page 47.

# Resumé tips

When you're writing your resumé, keep these tips in mind:

- Keep it simple and concise—most people do not need more than two pages.
  - Don't sign or date your resumé, put the title "resumé" at the top, attach a photograph of yourself or include personal information such as age, sex, height or ethnic background.
  - Every time you apply for work, analyze the job requirements before you submit a resumé. If necessary, reorganize or rewrite your resumé in a way that clearly shows you can satisfy the job requirements.
  - List your strongest qualifications near the beginning of your resumé so that employers see them first. If you have lots of work experience that is related to the type of work you are applying for, put it before your education/training history. If you have more related education than work experience, put the education first.
  - Emphasize your accomplishments and achievements. Wherever possible, describe how your work helped solve problems and achieve goals.
  - Use active, expressive words to describe what you have done. Don't use "I" and "filler" words such as "I was responsible for..." or "My duties involved...". For a list of action words you can consider, visit [alis.alberta.ca/resume-action-words](http://alis.alberta.ca/resume-action-words).
- Be honest. Don't exaggerate or misrepresent yourself—most employers check. On the other hand, don't be too humble.
  - Make sure there are no errors in spelling, grammar or typing. Check and double-check!
  - Use wide margins and put information in point form to create lots of "white space" on the page.
  - Use bold to highlight information.
  - Print on good-quality white or off-white 8½" x 11" paper. Use a printer that produces a clean, clear copy.

## Revise, revise, revise!

**Before you start sending your resumé to employers, ask as many people as possible to give you feedback on your most recent draft(s).**

It's hard to proofread your own work, so the more fresh eyes, the better! Keep copies of your resumé drafts for future reference.

# Resumé master

A resumé master is a place to collect all the information that you might put on a resumé or talk about in an interview. It helps you keep track of details about your experience, education and other activities so you don't forget anything.

Your resumé master is a living document. If you keep adding to it throughout your career, you will always have a complete and up-to-date record of everything you have done. Having these details at your fingertips will make your future work search activities easier.

You won't include all the information in your resumé master on every resumé you write. When you send your resumé to an employer, just pick out the information that is relevant to that employer's needs. You can leave out any work experience that does not relate to the job you are applying for.

To create your resumé master, fill in the following worksheet. If a section does not apply to you, leave it blank. Refer to **Information to include** on page 23 for more details on what you should write in each section of the worksheet. To fill in the sections on skills and accomplishments, look back at the worksheets on pages 7, 9 and 11.



## Worksheet: My resumé master

### My contact information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, province, postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Education and training *List your education in chronological order, beginning with the most recent.*

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Year completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Program/credential (course, certificate, diploma): \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Year completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Program/credential (course, certificate, diploma): \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Year completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Program/credential (course, certificate, diploma): \_\_\_\_\_

Professional development workshops and seminars, adult education and other courses:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Work history and experience *List your experience in chronological order, beginning with the most recent.*

Work title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dates: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Work title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dates: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Skills** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Accomplishments** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer activities and community involvement** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Languages** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Awards and honours** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**School projects** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities, hobbies and interests** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**References**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# Resumé types

There are three major types of resumés: chronological, functional and combination.

Resumé type	Description	Advantages
<b>Chronological</b>	A chronological resumé lists your work, education and training history in chronological order from most recent to oldest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlights strong employment history</li> <li>• is the format employers are most familiar with</li> <li>• is easier to write than other types of resumés</li> </ul>
<b>Functional</b>	A functional resumé highlights your skills and capabilities, not work history. It organizes information about things you have done (on the job, at school, as a volunteer) in skill categories that are directly related to the requirements of the work you want.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimizes a lack of related experience or gaps in employment history</li> </ul>
<b>Combination</b>	A combination resumé highlights your skills by organizing information in skill categories, then briefly outlines your work history near the end of the resumé.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draws attention to what you can do while also providing “where and when” information</li> <li>• minimizes drawbacks, such as gaps in employment and lack of directly related experience</li> </ul>

The table above lists the advantages and disadvantages of each resumé type to help you choose the one that best fits your experience and situation.

In each of the three resumé types, some sections and information are optional. You can choose to include them or not. For example, list job titles if your experience is directly related to the type of work you want. If the job titles don't highlight the skills you want to emphasize, leave them out.

Likewise, if employers may not be familiar with the location of your previous employers, include the name of the city and province or country. If they are probably familiar with the employers on your list, you can leave addresses out.

Disadvantages	Use it if
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emphasizes a lack of related experience, gaps in employment or frequent job changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you have had a series of work assignments with increasing levels of responsibility</li> <li>your experience is directly related to the work you are applying for</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is not preferred by employers because it does not include specific “where and when” information</li> <li>is more difficult to write</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you don’t have directly related work experience</li> <li>you have changed jobs frequently</li> <li>you have been unemployed for long periods of time</li> <li>you are changing careers or industries</li> <li>you want to emphasize skills you have developed outside paid work (for example, at school, as a homemaker, as a volunteer)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is more difficult to organize and write</li> <li>puts less emphasis on specific employment experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you want to highlight your skills but do not want to risk making employers wonder about your work history</li> </ul>

On the following pages, you’ll find an outline and sample resumés for each resumé type:

- chronological resumés on pages 30–32
- functional resumés on pages 33–35
- combination resumés on pages 36–38

To see more resumé samples, go to Resumés and References at [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work).

The sample resumés show a few options for basic resumé formatting. For your resumé, use a format that you are comfortable with and that you know how to create. The formatting in some of the sample resumés may not work well if you are submitting your resumé in the body of an email or uploading it to a website. In these cases, see the suggestions in the section **Plain text resumés** on page 39 and **Sample combination resumé #2** on page 38.

# Your Name

Street address or box number  
 City, province postal code  
 Phone number(s)  
 Email address  
 Fax number (optional), website (optional)

## Objective (optional)

Describe the type of work you are seeking. Include this section only if it is not obvious and not described in your cover letter.

## Experience

List any jobs you have done that are relevant to the type of work you are applying for. You don't have to stop at three. Describe what you did in each job that required skills similar to those you would need in the new position. List other duties and responsibilities very briefly. Describe your accomplishments—for example, consistently met or exceeded sales targets or service standards; received good feedback from clients or customers. Start each item with active words—for example, "Helped set up..." instead of "Responsible for helping to set up..."

Work title (optional) 20XX–20XX  
 Employer name (most recent first)  
 City, province (optional)

- Relevant responsibilities, skills, duties and accomplishments (describe in a bulleted list)

Work title (optional) 20XX–20XX  
 Employer name (second-most recent)  
 City, province (optional)

- Relevant responsibilities, skills, duties and accomplishments (describe in a bulleted list)

Work title (optional) 20XX–20XX  
 Employer name (third-most recent)  
 City, province (optional)

- Relevant responsibilities, skills, duties and accomplishments (describe in a bulleted list)

## Education

List any diploma or certificate programs you have taken. Also list short education, training and professional development courses that relate to the type of work you are applying for.

Name of educational institution 20XX–20XX  
 City, province (optional)  
 Diploma, certificate or degree earned; focus of study or training (optional)

Name of training or professional development course Month 20XX

## Other (optional)

Include sections for any other relevant information—for example, Languages, Awards and Honours, or Hobbies and Interests.

# Bradley Roy

80 Smalls Avenue, Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 1M6  
780-000-0000    bradley.roy@email.address

## Certifications

Alberta-certified journeyman welder  
WHMIS certification

## Experience

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <p>Apprentice Welder<br/>Smythe Manufacturing, Fort McMurray</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read blueprints</li> <li>• Laid out, cut and fitted materials for welds</li> <li>• Inspected and identified faults in materials and equipment</li> <li>• Set up and maintained machines and equipment, including sharpening and tempering of tools</li> <li>• Repaired equipment using lathe, drill press, milling and threading machines</li> <li>• Used and maintained oxy-acetylene, electric arc and spot welding equipment, as well as brazing and soldering equipment and brakes and shears</li> <li>• Welded pipelines, machinery, equipment and automotive equipment (brakes, hydraulic systems, transmissions, radiators, lights, etc.)</li> </ul> | 2013–2017   |
| <p>Labourer<br/>M &amp; M Construction, Grande Prairie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loaded, unloaded and moved construction materials, tools and equipment</li> <li>• Shovelled and raked earth to excavate and backfill</li> <li>• Shovelled cement and other materials into cement mixers, and mixed, poured and spread concrete</li> <li>• Assembled and dismantled scaffolding, ramps, catwalks, shoring and barricades</li> <li>• Demolished buildings, sorted and removed debris, and cleaned and piled salvaged materials</li> </ul>   | 2010–2013   |
| <p>Landscaping Assistant<br/>City Turf, Grande Prairie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mowed, power-raked, edged and fertilized lawns</li> <li>• Laid sod and planted trees</li> </ul>   | Summer 2010 |
| <p>Gas Station Attendant<br/>Bonaventure Gas, Grande Prairie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Served customers and accepted payments</li> <li>• Pumped gas and checked automotive fluids and tire pressure</li> <li>• Filled propane vehicles and cylinders</li> <li>• Closed store at end of shift</li> </ul>  | 2009–2010   |

Sample chronological resumé #1:  
experienced tradesperson

See Bradley's cover letter  
on page 43.

## Education

Welder technical training, ABC College, Fort McMurray	2013–2016
Completed Grade 12, XYZ High School, Edmonton	2006–2009

# TAYA OKITA

6908 Goldview Dr. NW  
 Calgary, Alberta T3B 3K9  
 Email: taya.okita@email.address  
 Tel: 403-000-0000

Sample chronological resumé #2:  
 high school graduate  
 with paid work experience

See Taya's reference list  
 on page 47.

## EXPERIENCE

**Assistant Manager** (part time), Short Circuit Electronics 2017–2018

- Supervised six part-time employees
- Handled customer complaints
- Helped interview and train employees
- Helped plan monthly staff meetings
- Suggested changes to employee scheduling to better accommodate their needs

**Sales Associate** (part time), Short Circuit Electronics 2016–2017

- Answered customers' questions and helped them choose electronics
- Processed sales and returns

**Stock Clerk** (part time), Food World 2015–2016

- Stocked groceries
- Took inventory
- Helped shoppers find products
- Provided carry-out service

## EDUCATION

ABC High School 2017

## LANGUAGES

English (fluent), Japanese (conversational)

## AWARDS AND HONOURS

- Graduated with honours (85% average)
- Received Short Circuit sales associate of the month award twice
- Promoted to Short Circuit assistant manager after less than a year

## ACTIVITIES/INTERESTS

- Active member of student council in Grades 10–12
- Avid video gamer

# Your Name

Street address or box number  
City, province postal code  
Phone number(s)  
Email address  
Fax number (optional), website (optional)

## **Objective** (optional)

Describe the type of work you are seeking. Include this section only if it is not obvious and not described in your cover letter.

## **Summary of Qualifications** (optional)

Briefly describe what makes you a good fit for the job. For example, you might include an overview of your experience, credentials, knowledge and availability.

## **Skill Title 1**

Group your skills and characteristics (from three to six) under skill titles, listed separately. Include skills that are relevant to the position you're applying for, such as Communication, Customer Service, Organizational or Troubleshooting.

Support each skill or characteristic with an example of how you've used it. Examples can come from any area of your life, not just from jobs. For example, under Organizational, describe what you organized and what the results were.

Avoid self-evaluation. For example, under Customer Service, instead of writing "provided excellent service," write "improved customer satisfaction ratings." Even better, tell how much the ratings improved or list any recognition (for example, employee of the week) you received.

## **Skill Title 2**

## **Skill Title 3**

## **Experience** (optional)

Describe paid and volunteer experience with a focus on what you did rather than on where and when you did the work.

## **Education and Training** (optional)

Describe your formal and informal education with a focus on what you learned and accomplished.

# Sébastien Leblanc

324 Wildthorn Drive SE  
 Calgary, Alberta  
 T2J 1Z2  
 Phone: 403-000-0000

Sample functional resumé #1:  
 high school student with  
 no paid work experience

See Sébastien's cover letter  
 on page 44.

## Summary of qualifications

Grade 10 student looking for page position with the Calgary Public Library. Enthusiastic reader with three months of experience volunteering at the school library. Available to work after school and on weekends.

## Library knowledge

- Learned library processes and Dewey Decimal System volunteering at school library
- Expert user of PCs in a Windows environment
- Visit Calgary Public Library often, so am familiar with my local branch and library programs
- Enjoy organizational tasks

## Responsible and motivated

- Have perfect attendance and no lates at school
- Achieved honours in first semester of high school
- Always turn in homework on time
- Volunteered as assistant coach for kids' soccer league for two years and attended all games
- Have played the cello since the age of five and practise daily (placed second in regional competition last year)

## Communication skills

- Good at listening and following instructions
- As a soccer coach, had to be able to explain things clearly
- Speak and write English and French fluently
- Have taken two Spanish courses

## Teamwork skills

- Play volleyball and used to play soccer, both games where teamwork is important
- Work well with people of all ages: coaching little kids, playing sports and doing school projects with people my own age, and working with teachers and the school librarian

# Mariam Khoury

#2, 11925 McBain Road  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6W 1K2  
Phone: 587-000-0000  
Email: mjkhoury@email.address

Sample functional resumé #2:  
recent immigrant with limited  
skills and experience

## Summary

My goal is to find a position in a restaurant kitchen where I can help with cleaning and food preparation. I have always loved to cook and would eventually like to become an apprentice cook. I am available to work full time, including weekdays, evenings, weekends and holidays.

## Kitchen Skills

- Cleaning and chopping vegetables
- Preparing and measuring ingredients
- Storing food
- Following safety processes
- Washing dishes
- Putting away dishes and equipment
- Cleaning floors and countertops
- Disposing of garbage

## Personal Characteristics

- Friendly and outgoing. I love meeting new people and am looking forward to working as part of a team.
- Reliable and organized. As a mother of two young children, I keep our household orderly and on schedule.
- Proactive and motivated. I like to keep busy and am good at finding ways to make myself useful, such as offering to help neighbours with chores or babysitting.

## Education

- Enrolled in an upcoming food safety course at ABC Technical College, Edmonton
- Currently taking classes to improve my reading and writing in English

# Your Name

Street address or box number  
 City, province postal code  
 Phone number(s)  
 Email address  
 Fax number (optional), website (optional)

## **Objective** (optional)

Describe the type of work you are seeking. Include this section only if it is not obvious and not described in your cover letter.

## **Summary of Qualifications** (optional)

Briefly describe what makes you a good fit for the job. For example, you might include an overview of your experience, credentials, knowledge and availability.

## **Skill Title 1**

Group your skills and characteristics (from three to six) under skill titles, listed separately. Include skills that are relevant to the position you're applying for, such as Communication, Customer Service, Organizational or Troubleshooting.

Support each skill or characteristic with an example of how you've used it. Examples can come from any area of your life, not just from jobs. For example, under Organizational, describe what you organized and what the results were.

Avoid self-evaluation. For example, under Customer Service, instead of writing "provided excellent service," write "improved customer satisfaction ratings." Even better, tell how much the ratings improved or list any recognition (for example, employee of the week) you received.

## **Skill Title 2**

## **Skill Title 3**

## **Experience**

Position title (optional), Employer name City, province (optional)	20XX–20XX (most recent first)
--	----------------------------------

Position title (optional), Employer name City, province (optional)	20XX–20XX (second-most recent)
--	-----------------------------------

## **Education**

List any diploma or certificate programs you have taken. Also list short education, training and professional development courses that relate to the type of work you are applying for.

Diploma, certificate or degree earned; focus of study or training (optional) Name of educational institution, city, province (city and province are optional)	20XX–20XX
--	-----------

Name of training or professional development course	Month 20XX
---	------------

## **Other** (optional)

Include sections for any other relevant information—for example, Languages, Awards and Honours, or Hobbies and Interests.

# ANN MCKINNEY

1456 Saylor Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 4X7  
 HOME: 403-000-0000 CELL: 403-999-9999  
 amckinney@email.address

## SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- ◆ Five years of experience serving food and beverages in a busy restaurant
- ◆ Efficiently and courteously served up to 12 tables at a time
- ◆ Volunteer experience tabulating monies at community bingos and operating concession booths for various charitable organizations
- ◆ Skilled at following procedures, adapting, being organized and performing repetitive tasks (as an employee, homemaker and volunteer)
- ◆ Available to work flexible hours

## SKILLS

### Customer Service

- ◆ Greeted customers and presented menus
- ◆ Helped customers select menu items
- ◆ Placed orders with the kitchen
- ◆ Served food and beverages

### Cash Handling

- ◆ Entered customer food orders on computerized cash register
- ◆ Prepared itemized bills
- ◆ Accepted payment and made change

### Food Handling

- ◆ Assembled hospital patient food trays
- ◆ Delivered trays to patients
- ◆ Operated dishwasher
- ◆ Observed safe food handling procedures in all tasks

## EXPERIENCE

Food and Beverage Server Good Fortune Cafe, Calgary	2011-2013
Dietary Aid General Hospital, Calgary	2008-2011
Server B&G Fast Food, Calgary	Summer 2008

Sample combination resumé #1:  
experienced worker returning to  
workforce after a long absence

See Ann's cover letter  
on page 45.

JOHN GREENBIRD

4607 50 St.  
Ponoka, Alberta  
T4J 1A1

Cell: 403-000-0000  
greenbird.j@email.address

#### OBJECTIVE

Forklift driver / warehousing position

#### QUALIFICATIONS

- \* Worked as senior forklift operator for major manufacturer of gas line industry equipment
- \* Tracked shipments, loaded trucks and railcars, and supervised workers
- \* Handled large shipments of gas industry equipment using warehouse management software (WMS), packaged shipments and helped track invoicing
- \* Maintained and repaired forklift equipment, kept all areas clean and acted as shift team safety leader

#### SKILLS

- \* Operating a forklift
- \* Stacking and unstacking cargo in warehouses, shipping yards and various transport vehicles
- \* Maintaining and repairing forklifts and related equipment
- \* Shipping and receiving
- \* Using WMS and Inventory Shipping Receiving Picking (ISRP) inventory tracking systems
- \* Training and supervising workers

#### TRAINING

- \* WHMIS recertification (April 2010 and May 2018)
- \* Reach truck operator course (June 2016)
- \* Counterbalance forklift for experienced operators course (November 2015)
- \* WMS training (November 2013)
- \* Transportation and handling of dangerous goods course (January 2010)

#### EXPERIENCE

Dynamic Projects, Ponoka, Alberta

- \* Forklift Supervisor, 2014-2018
- \* Shipping Clerk, 2009-2014

Sample combination resumé #2:  
experienced worker who  
recently lost job

Example of a plain text resumé  
suitable for emailing

# Plain text resumés

Your resumé may need to look different depending on whether you are giving it to someone in person, emailing it, uploading it to an employer's website or using it to fill in an online application.

If you are printing your resumé or emailing it as a Microsoft Word or PDF file, using formatting like bold text, different font sizes, bullets and indenting makes your resumé look nicer. But if you are sending out your resumé in the body of an email or submitting it through a website, the formatting might be lost, making your resumé difficult to read. For this reason, you may need to use a plain text resumé (also called an ASCII resumé). This is a resumé with little or no formatting.

See a plain text resumé, go to [alis.alberta.ca/ascii-resume](https://alis.alberta.ca/ascii-resume).

**Sample combination resumé #2** on page 38 is also an example of a plain text resumé.

## Final Checklist

You can use a checklist to review the things you should include and things not to include in your resume. This checklist is at [alis.alberta.ca/resume-checklist](https://alis.alberta.ca/resume-checklist).



# Cover Letters



**A cover letter is a businesslike way to introduce your resumé or application form. It is your chance to get the employer's attention by explaining how your qualifications fit the employer's needs. An effective cover letter must highlight skills and accomplishments that are relevant to the particular job you are applying for.**

This section includes

- what to put in your cover letter
- a cover letter outline
- sample cover letters

# Cover letter content

When you're writing your cover letter, keep the following in mind:

- Always tailor your letter to show how your skills relate to a particular employer's needs. Don't just send the same letter to every employer.
- If you're responding to an ad that includes a job reference number, include the number in your cover letter.
- Make the letter brief, specific and no longer than one page. Use simple and direct language.
- Show your awareness of the types of things the company is doing and its objectives. Google the employer or search the employer's website for information.
- Don't just repeat the facts from your resumé. Stress how the employer will benefit from hiring you and how you think you will benefit by becoming a part of the company. It is important to anticipate the reader's questions and provide answers. Make it easy to see where you would fit in.
- Limit sentences starting with "I".
- Personalize your letter. It should reflect your personality. However, be careful to avoid appearing pushy, overbearing or too familiar. This is a business letter, so humour is generally out of place here.
- Mention that you are available at the employer's convenience for an interview or to discuss opportunities. Give a phone number (either home or cell) where you can be reached.
- After your name, include the word "Enclosure," which means that your resumé is enclosed or attached.

- Check the letter carefully for any spelling, punctuation, grammar or typing errors. Ask a friend to check it too if you are not sure.
- Print on the same good-quality paper as your resumé, with the same fonts. The two documents should match and look professional. Use a printer that produces a clean, clear copy.
- If you promise to contact the employer to follow up, do it!

On the following pages, you'll find a cover letter outline and sample letters:

- general outline on page 42
- cover letter for an advertised position on page 43
- cover letter for a non-advertised position on page 44
- cover letter for a referral-based position on page 45

For more information about cover letters, visit [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/cover-letters](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/cover-letters).

## Options for emailing your cover letter

**If you are sending your resumé as an email attachment, you can put your cover letter in the body of the email, include it in the same file as your resumé or attach it as a separate file.**

If you attach the cover letter to the email, write a brief message in the body of the email to say that your resumé and cover letter are attached—don't just leave the subject heading and body of the email blank!

Your address  
City, province, postal code

Date

Name of recipient  
Recipient's position title  
Company name  
Street address or box number  
City, province, postal code

Re: Position Title (Job Reference Number, if applicable)

**Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:**

Address a specific person, not Sir/Madam. If you're not sure whether the person is male or female, don't use Mr./Ms. and use the person's full name instead—for example, Dear Pat Walker.

**First paragraph**

Explain your reason for writing. If you are applying for a specific job, say so and state how you heard about the opportunity. If someone referred you to the employer, name that person—for example, "Joe Davis, your customer service manager, suggested I write to you." If you're not applying for a specific job, just say that you are interested in working for this organization.

**Middle paragraph(s)**

Explain what makes you a good fit for this position or type of work. Point out any key experience (including volunteer or school experience) that qualifies you for the position. Keep your paragraphs short. If you are responding to a job posting, explain how your skills and experience match those described in the posting.

**Last paragraph**

State that a resumé or application is enclosed for more information. Offer to provide additional information, if needed. Request an interview. If appropriate, let the reader know you will be checking back to set up an appointment.

Sincerely,

Your Name

(If you're sending your resumé in hard copy, leave three lines for your signature before your name. If you're sending it electronically, you don't need to leave space before your name.)

Enclosure

80 Smalls Avenue  
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 1M6

July 3, 2018

R.C. Jacobson  
Construction Superintendent  
Allied Construction  
Box 2323  
Grande Prairie, Alberta T5V 4Z3

Re: Journeyman Welder Position (Job Reference Number 999999)

Dear Mr. Jacobson:

I am interested in the journeyman welder position that you advertised this week in the *Daily Herald Tribune*.

I recently completed my journeyman certification with Smythe Manufacturing in Fort McMurray. I have experience in the construction industry as I worked for three years on a variety of construction sites in Grande Prairie. My schedule is flexible, so I am available to work morning, afternoon and evening shifts as your ad describes. I also meet your requirement for WHMIS certification.

My resumé is attached. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my qualifications.

Sincerely,  
Bradley Roy

Enclosure

Cover letter for an advertised position—experienced tradesperson

See Bradley's chronological resumé on page 31.

324 Wildthorn Drive SE  
Calgary, Alberta T2J 1Z2

September 14, 2018

Ms. Hanna Brodyk  
Human Resources  
Calgary Public Library  
Calgary, Alberta T1K 7G4

Dear Ms. Brodyk:

The next time the library has an opening for a student page, I would like to be considered for the position.

Because I already have library experience from volunteering at the school library, I will be able to learn the job quickly and work efficiently right from the start. My strong academic record, volunteer work and dedication as a musician show that I'm responsible and motivated, so you can count on me to arrive for shifts on time and do the work carefully. I get along well with people of all different ages and backgrounds at school, on sports teams and as a coach, and I will enjoy working with library customers and staff. As a volleyball and soccer player, I'm also in great shape for lifting and shelving books!

My resumé and the completed application form that I downloaded from your website are enclosed. I will call you next week to find out when it would be convenient to discuss my qualifications.

Sincerely,



Sébastien LeBlanc

Enclosure

Cover letter for a non-advertised position—high school student with no paid work experience

See Sébastien's functional resumé on page 34.

Cover letter for a referral-based application—experienced worker returning to workforce after a long absence

See Ann's combination resumé on page 37.

1456 Saylor Drive  
Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 4X7

May 13, 2018

Mr. Li Cheng, Manager  
Riteway Foods  
456 Main Street  
Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 7G4

Dear Mr. Cheng:

Rita Stobbe, my neighbour, suggested that I contact you. I would like to be considered for a full-time cashier position.

My experience as a food and beverage server has taught me how to deal pleasantly and efficiently with customers, even when working under pressure. I take pride in being able to remember items and prices and handle cash with a high degree of accuracy. The enclosed resumé briefly describes my experience.

I will call you on May 22 to arrange a meeting, if I have not heard from you by then.

Sincerely,



Ann McKinney

Enclosure

# Other Tools



**Reference lists, portfolios and application forms are additional tools that you can use to market yourself to employers.**

This section talks about

- types of references and how to present them to an employer
- what a portfolio is and why you might want one
- application forms

# References

Most employers check references. Choose references who know you well and can speak clearly and enthusiastically about you. Your references should also be objective—avoid using a family member as a reference.

There are three main types of references:

- **Work-related references**—past supervisors, co-workers or people you have done volunteer work for
- **Academic references**—teachers or counsellors who can talk about your performance at school or in training
- **Personal references**—friends or neighbours who know you personally and can tell an employer that you would do a good job (only use personal references if you don't have enough work-related or academic references)

Always ask your references for permission to use their names and whether they feel comfortable recommending you. The better informed your references are, the better prepared they will be when employers call them. Give them a copy of your resumé and point out how your qualifications relate to your work search targets. Tell them about the type of work you will be applying for and the skills you want to emphasize.

List your references on a separate sheet of paper. Include their job titles, mailing addresses, email addresses and phone numbers. (If you're using someone as a personal reference, you don't need to include that person's job title.) Use the same font and formatting on the reference list that you used for your resumé and cover letter so that it looks professional. Take the list with you when you meet employers. Remember to put your own name somewhere on your list of references, in case it gets separated from your resumé.

Most employers will contact your references by phone, but some may ask you to provide a letter of recommendation. You may also need to use

a letter if your reference has moved and can no longer be reached by phone. If you ask one of your references to write you a letter, try to give that person as much notice as possible.

For more information see [alis.alberta.ca/references](http://alis.alberta.ca/references).

## TAYA OKITA

6908 Goldview Dr. NW  
Calgary, Alberta T3B 3K9  
Email: taya.okita@email.address  
Tel: 403-000-0000

### REFERENCES

#### Mr. Joshua Singleton

Owner  
Short Circuit Electronics  
4805-14 Avenue NW  
Calgary, AB T3B 0M7  
403-000-0000  
joshua@shortcircuit.com

#### Ms. Denise Rice

Manager  
Food World  
242 Butler Street SW  
Calgary, AB T2T 3M9  
403-000-0000  
denise.rice@foodworld.ca

#### Dr. Cecilia Sanchez

Math 30 Teacher  
ABC High School  
38 River Valley Road  
Calgary, AB T2P 4E4  
403-000-0000  
cmsanchez@abchighschool.com

References for a  
high school student

See Taya's  
chronological  
resumé on page 32.

# Portfolios

For years, people in creative occupations have used portfolios to show the quality and style of their work. Employers have come to expect photographers, graphic artists, writers, crafters, broadcasters and others in creative fields to submit copies of their best work when they apply for a job.

But portfolios can also be a good way for students and people in other occupations to show proof of their skills during an interview.

Here are some examples of items you might include in your portfolio:

- projects you completed on your own or with others (for example, school assignments, work reports or volunteer activities)
- documents from previous jobs (for example, records of employment, job performance evaluations, letters of recommendation or letters of reference)
- thank-you cards from people who appreciated something you did

- items that show the results you have achieved or the quality of your work (for example, certificates, awards, award nomination papers, safety records, sales figures, marketing plans or technical drawings)
- posters or brochures about events you have worked on

You can keep your portfolio in a binder, or you can scan documents to create an electronic portfolio. When you have an interview, bring your portfolio with you. Ask the employer's permission to show the portfolio. Highlight only the items that are most relevant to the job you are applying for. Some employers may not want to see the portfolio, but many will appreciate the time and energy that went into creating it.

For more information on creating and using a portfolio, see [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/portfolios](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/portfolios).

# Application forms

Some employers require applicants to complete an application form, either online or on paper, instead of or in addition to submitting a resumé. They find it easier to compare applicants' qualifications if everyone has completed the same form. Most of the information will be the same as that on your resumé.

When you fill out an application form, follow the employer's instructions carefully. Use the format and delivery method the employer prefers.

For example, if the employer asks you to drop off the application form in person, don't send it by email. If you're not sure, ask.

For more advice on completing application forms, go to [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/apply-for-work](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/apply-for-work).

# Interviews



**A job interview is a business meeting. Both parties want to make a deal: you have skills and the employer has work. Your first task is to show that you have the skills to get the job done. Your second task is to find out whether you are interested in the work.**

This section discusses

- how you can prepare for the interview
- what you should do and say during the interview
- what you should do after the interview
- common interview questions and the best ways to answer them

# Before the interview

Set the stage for a successful interview by doing everything you can in advance to be ready, confident and on time.

## Setting up the interview

When an employer calls to set up an interview, politely find out as much as you can. For example, will the interview be an initial screening interview (to determine whether you will be interviewed more seriously later) or a selection interview (to make a hiring decision)? Will there be one interviewer or several? Ask for the interviewers' names and position titles.

The caller will tell you where and when the interview will be held. If you are not familiar with the interview location, it might be a good idea to ask about nearby transit stops or parking areas.

If you are applying for a job in another city, an employer may want to interview you by phone. Arrange to receive the call at a time and place where you can speak comfortably. Then plan to have your resumé and portfolio (if you have one), a pen and some paper, and your list of questions with you when you answer the phone. For more advice, see [alis.alberta.ca/online-interviews](https://alis.alberta.ca/online-interviews).

## Preparing for common interview questions

One of the main steps in getting ready for an interview is to review common interview questions and prepare answers. This is particularly important for questions you hope the employer won't ask.

If you think the employer may see something as a potential problem (for example, gaps in your qualifications or work history, or other reasons you might not seem suitable for the job), think about how you can introduce the topic and explain why it won't be a problem. For advice on how to address different kinds of situations and problems, go to [alis.alberta.ca/challenges](https://alis.alberta.ca/challenges).

You should also know what questions employers are not allowed to ask. For example, they can't ask you about your age, racial origin or religious beliefs. For more information, go to [alis.alberta.ca/interview-questions](https://alis.alberta.ca/interview-questions).

No matter how irrelevant or strange an interview question may sound, it generally has a purpose. For example, when interviewers ask questions like "If you could be any vegetable, which vegetable would you choose to be?" they are probably more interested in how you handle the unexpected than in the content of your answer.

Although no two interviewers will ask exactly the same questions, most interview questions fall into one of four categories:

- questions about you and your skills
- "what if" and "what did you do when" questions
- questions about your interest in the job or organization
- questions about your expectations and plans

Each type of question has a different purpose.

### Prepare your questions for the interviewer

**As you get ready for your interview, prepare *your* questions too.**

What do you want to know about the job and the organization that you couldn't find out when doing your research beforehand? You may want to ask about the working conditions, the people you would be working with or how much travel would be involved.

Always word your questions politely and leave questions about pay and benefits until after you have been offered the job.

For more information on preparing your interview questions, visit [alis.alberta.ca/questions-to-ask-in-a-job-interview](https://alis.alberta.ca/questions-to-ask-in-a-job-interview).

## Questions about you and your skills

### Purpose

Employers want to know what you can do for them, what kind of person you are, whether you will fit in well with other employees and what makes you different from other applicants.

### Typical questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you the best person for this job?
- What is your greatest strength?  
Your greatest weakness?
- What five words would you say describe you best?
- What kind of working environment do you prefer?
- Do you like...?
- Can you...?
- Why should we hire you?

### How to answer

These questions are much easier to answer if you have identified your skills and learned as much as you can about the job or employer.

- Briefly describe your strongest qualifications. If you are asked to describe a personal weakness, choose one that will not prevent you from doing a good job.
- Talk about your skills and characteristics and where you have demonstrated them. For example, if you know the job requires patience (to deal with dissatisfied customers) or persistence (to solve problems), focus on situations in which you have demonstrated those characteristics.
- Be tactful but honest. When interviewers ask about your preferences or ability to cope with certain types of situations, the job probably involves those situations. Say you are willing to fulfil job requirements (for example, work shifts, relocate or retrain) *if that's true*. But if you wouldn't accept shift work, are a student who can work only evenings and weekends, or would not be willing or able to relocate or retrain, say so. There is no point in being offered work you would not accept.
- Stay positive and upbeat. If you feel nervous or find the questions difficult, take a deep breath to calm yourself. Smile and keep your head up, even if you think the interview is not going well. If there is something negative about your work history, acknowledge the facts and briefly describe any circumstances that were beyond your control. Then quickly move on to something positive. For example, if you have been fired, describe the positive things you learned from the experience. Avoid saying anything negative about previous jobs (for example, salary, working conditions, supervisors or co-workers). If you must say something negative, back it up with facts that can be checked. Otherwise, employers may see you as a potential troublemaker.

## ? “What if” and “what did you do when” questions

### Purpose

Employers want to know how you will handle situations that may arise on the job.

### Typical questions

- What if a customer started yelling at you. What would you do?
- What would you do if you saw a co-worker doing something unsafe?
- Tell me about a time when someone criticized you in public. What did you do?
- Describe a time when a teacher or supervisor did something you didn't like.
- Think of a time when you had a problem working with someone. What did you do?

### How to answer

“What if” questions are sometimes easier to answer than “what did you do when” questions, but they can both be challenging. Be honest and briefly describe what you think would be the best way to handle the situation.

Don't blurt out the first answer that comes to mind. Take a reasonable amount of time to think through your answer. Interviewers will usually follow up “what did you do when” questions with more detailed questions about exactly what you did and what happened as a result. So describe real situations. Don't make up answers or try to gloss over having handled a situation badly by describing how you would handle a similar situation in the future. Interviewers who ask behaviour-based questions believe that how you reacted in the past indicates how you will react in the future. They may ignore “how I would do it differently next time” types of responses.

## ? Questions about your interest in the job/organization

### Purpose

Employers want to know if you are really interested in the job and understand the goals and needs of the organization.

### Typical questions

- What interests you about our services/products?
- What is your understanding of the nature of the job and the company?
- What do you know about our company? Our products?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why did you apply for this position?

### How to answer

Summarize what you know about the company and its goals, operations and products. If you can answer this type of question well, you will stand out from other applicants. This is where it really pays off to have done some research before the interview. Then ask any questions you may have about the organization's goals and challenges. Show interest in helping the organization overcome its challenges and achieve its goals.

## ? Questions about your plans and expectations

### Purpose

Employers want to know whether your expectations are realistic and whether you will stick around long enough to make it worthwhile to train you.

### Typical questions

- Where do you see yourself one year from now? Five years from now?
- Why have you changed jobs so many times?
- What salary and benefits do you expect?

### How to answer

- Let the employer know you won't quit after a short time. Talk about how the job fits into your career plans, but be brief. Interviewers are more interested in hearing about what you can do for the organization than what the organization can do for you.
- If you have changed jobs many times, explain why you felt it was necessary. Emphasize that you expect to stay longer in this job (if that's true).
- Avoid discussing salary and benefits until after a job offer has been made. Understandably, employers want to find out what hiring you will cost them. However, if you state a figure they consider too high, you will not be seriously considered for the position. If your figure is low, that's all you will be offered.

If the interviewer insists that you state what salary you expect, give the typical salary range for the type of work you are discussing. Say that you expect a reasonable salary for someone with your qualifications. If appropriate, let the employer know you are open to negotiation depending on the benefits offered. If you don't already know the typical salary range for the type of work you want, you could ask people in the field or look it up at [alis.alberta.ca/occinfo-wages-and-salaries-in-alberta](http://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo-wages-and-salaries-in-alberta) before your interview.

It's a good idea to write down your answers to common interview questions before you go to an interview. You may also want to ask a friend or family member to play the role of the interviewer so you can practise delivering your answers.

Use the worksheet on the next page to help you prepare for an interview. Start with the questions provided. Then choose some typical questions from the examples listed on the preceding pages and write them down in the space provided. If you like, you can also write down other questions that you think the interviewer might ask. In the Answer column, make notes about what you would say if those questions come up in the interview.

For additional information about answering interview questions, visit [alis.alberta.ca/interview-questions-about-your-skills](http://alis.alberta.ca/interview-questions-about-your-skills).

**Worksheet: My answers to common interview questions**

Question	Answer
<b>Tell me about yourself.</b>	
<b>What is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?</b>	
<b>Think of a time when you had a problem working with someone. What did you do?</b>	
<b>Where do you see yourself one year from now? Five years from now?</b>	

## Arriving at the interview

There are a few things you can do to get the interview off to a good start:

- Decide in advance what to wear. You *must* be clean, neat and well groomed. Dress the way you expect the interviewer to dress.
- Allow plenty of time for the interview. If you are not sure how long it will take to get from your home to the interview location, make a test run. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early and briefly let the receptionist know you have arrived. For any number of reasons, the interview may take longer than you expect it to. Don't box yourself in by planning to meet someone in an hour or by paying for limited parking time.
- If you have to wait a few minutes, use the time to take a few deep breaths and try to look confident. Don't be afraid to look at people and smile.
- Don't chew gum and try not to fidget.
- Don't use your cellphone or other electronic devices while you are waiting. Turn off your cellphone ringer before you arrive and leave it off until after you leave the interview.

Be pleasant, honest and sincere with everyone in the office. Interviewers may ask other staff members for their opinions.



# During the interview

The interview begins as soon as you meet the interviewer. What should you say and do to make it go as smoothly as possible?

## Making a good first impression

Most interviewers “size up” applicants in the first minute or two. You want to do your best to create a good first impression. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- When you first meet the interviewer(s), introduce yourself and repeat their name(s) as you shake hands firmly and make eye contact.
- Remain standing until you are offered a chair, and then sit up straight.
- Follow the interviewer’s lead. He or she may spend a few moments making small talk. If so, say something positive about the weather or traffic, for example, but be prepared to move quickly into the main part of the interview when the interviewer is ready to do so.



## Handling the main interview

When you get to the main part of an interview, take every opportunity to talk about your skills, knowledge and achievements. Emphasize what you can contribute to the organization. Avoid mentioning your needs until after a job offer is made.

- Point out connections between your skills and the employer’s needs, even if they seem obvious to you.
- Avoid answering just “yes” and “no.” Try to figure out what the interviewer really wants to know and explain your answers fully.
- Ask questions based on your research and listen carefully to the answers. If the interview seems quite “structured” (all applicants are asked the same questions in the same order no matter how they answer), it is generally best to save your questions until the end. If the interviewer asks more “open” questions (for example, “Why are you interested in this position?”) and bases the next question on your answer, you will have more opportunities to ask questions and lead the conversation toward your strongest qualifications. It’s OK to write down your questions before and during the interview so you can refer to them if you need to.
- Use a pen and paper (not a laptop or other electronic device) to take notes during an interview.
- If you don’t understand a question, politely ask the interviewer to rephrase the question. If you don’t know the answer, say so.
- Take some time to think about difficult questions before you say anything.



- If the interviewer raises an issue such as “You’ve been out of the workforce a long time” or “You don’t have experience directly related to this job,” deal with the concern directly. Explain why it would not be a problem. For example, explain how you have kept your knowledge up to date, or point out how the skills you developed in school or previous work relate to this job.
- Near the end of the interview, the interviewer should tell you how and when the successful candidate will be selected. Summarize your skills, state that you are very interested in the position (if you still are) and ask any remaining questions you may have about the work.
- If you are comfortable doing so, ask whether it would be acceptable for you to follow up by calling the interviewer and, if so, when you should call.
- Thank the interviewer, give a firm handshake if he or she offers a hand and leave promptly.

For additional information about handling job interviews, visit [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/interviews-and-offers](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/interviews-and-offers).

## Communicating through body language

Your mannerisms, gestures, body movements, posture, tone of voice and expressions communicate just as much as your words do. For example, the position of your body while you are speaking and listening says a lot about how interested and confident you are. Slouching or being too laid back can make you seem uninterested. On the other hand, sitting on the edge of your chair can make you come across as nervous or tense. It’s best to sit up straight or lean forward slightly.

Here are a few other things to keep in mind:

- When you shake hands with the interviewer, grip his or her full hand firmly.
- Smile and make eye contact with the interviewer to show that you are friendly and confident.
- When seated, keep your feet on the floor. Put your hands in your lap or on the arms of your chair, except when you gesture to emphasize something you say. Do not cross your arms.
- Resist the urge to fidget or play with something in your hands.

# After the interview

With the tough part behind you, you can do a few more things to improve your chances of getting the job and to prepare yourself for future interviews.

## Thanking the interviewer(s)

Regardless of the outcome of an interview, it is a good idea to write a brief letter of thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration. It sets you apart from other applicants and may remind the interviewer about you and your strongest qualifications. You can also use your note to *briefly* supply additional information.

Like your resumé and cover letter, a thank-you letter should be tailored to the particular employer, so mention specifics of the interview. Here are some guidelines:

- **First paragraph:** Thank the interviewer for his or her time and for telling you about the company and the position.
- **Middle paragraph(s):** Note what you learned about the company during the interview. Remind the interviewer of why you are a good fit for the company's needs and mention any qualifications or experience that you didn't have a chance to talk about during the interview. If the interviewer raised any concerns during the interview or asked questions that you don't think you answered well, address them again here.
- **Final paragraph:** Confirm again that you are interested in the position.

It is OK to send your thank-you letter by email so the interviewer receives it as soon as possible after the interview. You may also want to follow up by sending a letter through regular mail. A handwritten letter is acceptable if your writing is easy to read.

## Reviewing how it went

Learn from each interview by asking yourself the following questions:

- Did the interviewer ask questions that I was not prepared for? If so, how can I prepare better for future interviews?
- Did I forget to ask anything about the job or organization?
- Did I emphasize the connection between my skills and the skills required for the job?
- Was I pleasant, honest and sincere?
- Did I answer the interviewer's underlying concerns as well as the questions asked?
- Did I address the employer's concerns in a positive way?
- Did I sum up my skills, and then leave promptly and politely at the end of the interview?
- What should I do differently next time?

Write down notes about the interview. Include names, what was discussed, salary figures (if the interviewer brought them up) and anything else you might need to remember if you are offered the job.

## Following up

If you promised to call the interviewer on a certain date, put a reminder in your work search plan, calendar or whatever other tool you use to track your activities. If the employer said you should expect a call by a certain date, note down the date and call if you have not heard anything by then.

Don't assume you have a job until an employer tells you when to start. Keep looking and following up on other opportunities, even after several interviews have gone very well. If a job doesn't come through, you won't have wasted time waiting.

If you receive several job offers, you can choose the job you like best. You may want to ask for a written offer so you know it is safe to turn down the others.

# Staying Positive



**Rejections and other disappointments happen in any work search. Realistic expectations about how long the search will take, a willingness to learn from your experiences and a healthy lifestyle will help you stay positive through the search process.**

This section will give you tips on

- dealing with rejection at different stages of the work search
- taking care of yourself physically and mentally

# Handling rejection

When searching for work, everyone gets rejected sometime. It is what you do with the rejection—how you handle it and use it to your advantage—that makes all the difference.

Here are some reasons for rejection and ways to overcome them:

- **You have not found many suitable job openings.** If you have found work easily in the past, your expectations for this work search may be unrealistic.  
Be honest with yourself about how much time and effort you have put into networking, contacting employers and other methods of finding work opportunities. If you can honestly say you have researched the possibilities well, you may have to broaden your work search targets. Discuss your situation with a career advisor or someone else whose judgment you respect. Alberta Supports Centres have career advisors available to assist you with your job search. (To find the centre nearest you, visit [alis.alberta.ca/asc](http://alis.alberta.ca/asc).)
- **Your applications usually don't make it past the screening stage—you have not been invited for many interviews.** There are a number of possible reasons you haven't been invited for an interview. For example, you may not have the required skills or education, your skills may be out of date, other applicants may have better qualifications or your application may not have clearly communicated that you are qualified.

If there is a good chance you haven't communicated your qualifications well on paper, take another look at your resumé. Does it tell employers clearly and concisely what you can do and what sort of person you are? If not, rewrite it. You can also get feedback on your resumé from career advisors.

The most direct way to find out why you haven't been invited for an interview is to ask. Call employers and explain that you are trying to improve your work search skills and would like some feedback on your application. You have nothing to lose and you could get some very valuable advice.

- **You just had an interview and it didn't go very well.** Why not follow up with the employer and ask what you could have done better? If you were not well prepared, decide what you will do differently to be better prepared next time. If you don't have the required skills, you may need to rethink your work search targets or do more research about specific work opportunities before you apply for them. Otherwise, consider it a learning experience and move on.
- **You got an interview, it seemed to go well and you have no idea why someone else got the job.** When there are many well-qualified applicants applying for the same job, employers have to make difficult decisions. The differences between successful applicants and unsuccessful ones may be hard to identify. Some employers may choose the applicant they feel would be the best fit with their other staff. Again, why not follow up with the employer to ask what you could have done better?

# Taking care of yourself

There are many things you can do to cope with the ups and downs that everyone experiences during a work search. Learning to handle rejection constructively in a positive way is one. Some other strategies are outlined below.

- **Stay healthy.** Eat well-balanced meals regularly and get plenty of rest. Exercise and enjoy the outdoors. Ten minutes on the move can make a world of difference to how you feel. Make your breaks short, but get away from work search activities completely.
- **Seek out people who can give you emotional support.** Tell family members and friends about what you are doing and how things are going. Try to keep your social life as normal as you can. Let people help you by brainstorming ideas with you, networking for you, and reviewing draft applications, resumés and cover letters.
- **Set realistic short-term goals and reward yourself when you achieve them.** For example, decide how many phone or email contacts you should be able to make each day. Then make a list of things that make you feel good but don't cost too much in time (for example, a longer walk than usual). Use these activities as rewards when you have achieved the day's objectives.
- **Keep growing.** Do lots of reading on current trends and subjects related to your work or areas of interest. Take short courses and attend conferences and seminars. Read books on time management, problem-solving, communication, self-esteem, relaxation or positive thinking.
- **Help others.** Get perspective on your own troubles by reaching out to help others. Do volunteer work that will make use of your skills, give you experience or allow you to meet people who could be helpful in your work search.
- **If you are looking for a full-time job, take temporary or part-time work to help keep your spirits up, as well as provide short-term income.** If your employers are impressed with your performance, they may offer you full-time work or pass on information about work opportunities they hear about. (One disadvantage to this strategy is that it decreases the amount of time and energy you can devote to your work search. Only you can decide if the advantages outweigh this disadvantage.)
- **Be kind to yourself.** Looking for work is tough for everyone. Don't beat yourself up if it's not going well.
- **Read every flattering thing (letter of praise, recommendation, performance appraisal) you have ever received.** Keep them handy and read them whenever you are feeling down.
- **Get help from your support network.** Brainstorm solutions with a friend, family member, teacher, career advisor or counsellor.
- **Don't lose your sense of humour.** What makes you laugh? Certain types of television shows? Being with particular friends? Laughter is a wonderful emotional release, so use it as often as you can.
- **Set a time limit on how long you will allow yourself to feel "down," preferably no more than a few hours.** Then start working your way back up again.

See the book *Positivity Works*, available at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications), for more suggestions on coping with stress and finding work.

# Next Steps



**During your work search, you should prepare yourself for when your efforts pay off and you get a job offer.**

You should be ready to

- decide whether to accept the offer, and negotiate the terms
- wrap up your work search in a way that will make your next one easier

# Responding to a job offer

When you have been looking for work for some time and you finally get a job offer, it is tempting to say yes right away! But hold on.

Take some time to consider the advantages and disadvantages of accepting the job. Did you like the feel of the place when you went for an interview? Can you afford to wait for a better opportunity? Will you be satisfied with the salary and benefits the employer is offering?

If you have questions or concerns about the hours, salary, benefits or other details, talk them over with the employer before you accept the position. You have no bargaining power if you have already accepted the job. Make it clear that

you are interested in the job, then ask if there is any room to negotiate. For example, if the salary offer is lower than you expected, you may be able to negotiate an increase in pay (starting now or in a few months), health or dental insurance coverage, or extra holiday time.

If you decide to turn down a job offer, be tactful and express your appreciation for the offer.

If you decide to accept, show your enthusiasm. If you have negotiated any special terms of employment, ask for confirmation in writing.

For more information on job offers, go to [alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/interviews-and-offers/negotiate-the-job-offer](https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/interviews-and-offers/negotiate-the-job-offer).

# Wrapping up your work search

Wrap up your work search by letting others know you have a new job:

- If you are currently employed, submit a polite letter of resignation that gives your employer notice. For information on how to write a resignation letter and how much notice you must give, go to [alis.alberta.ca/leaving-the-job](https://alis.alberta.ca/leaving-the-job). You may need a letter of reference in the future, so stay on good terms with your former employer.
- Let your references and contacts know that you have accepted a position and thank them for their help.
- Withdraw any other applications you have submitted by letting employers know you have accepted a position.

## Making your next work search easier

It's likely that you will change jobs a number of times over the course of your career. Here are some suggestions for making your next transition easier:

- Keep your master resumé up to date and create and maintain a work-related portfolio with notes and things such as letters of appreciation and performance appraisals. This way, tailoring your resumé will be easier next time.
- Stay in touch with people who have been supportive and helpful.
- Keep informed about new developments in the fields or industries that interest you and anticipate how changes are likely to affect your work search.
- Continue to learn and to update your skills.

Taking charge of your career by looking ahead will give you a sense of confidence and freedom that goes well beyond ordinary job security.

# Where to get more help

## alis.alberta.ca

Alis is Alberta's leading online source for career, education and jobs information. Here you'll find the resources you need for making the most of your future, including

- **alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite**—allows you to explore career options based on your values, skills, abilities and interests.
- **alis.alberta.ca/jobs**—links you to Alberta and regional job banks, public service job banks, employer and student job banks
- **alis.alberta.ca/OCCinfo**—provides information you want on occupations including job duties and working conditions, Alberta's employment outlook and wage and salary ranges
- **alis.alberta.ca/videos**—features real people working in real jobs to help you learn what knowledge and skills are required for different occupations

## Publications

You can download or order the following resources, free of charge, online through the alis website at **alis.alberta.ca/publications** or pick up copies at any Alberta Supports Centre.

*Advanced Techniques for Work Search*

*Assessing You: The First Step in Career Planning*

*Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation*

*My Choices, My Work, My Life*

*Positivity Works*

*Training for Work* (available online only)

*Workability: What You Need to Get and Keep a Job*

*Working in Alberta: A Guide for Internationally Trained and Educated Immigrants*

*Your Rights and Responsibilities at Work*

## Alberta Supports Centres

Alberta Supports Centres across the province provide information on occupations, career options, education programs and funding, and finding work. Offices have computers, phones, photocopiers and fax machines to use for your work search. To locate a centre near you go to **alis.alberta.ca/asc**.

## Employment Standards Contact Centre

Employment standards are minimum standards of employment for employees and employers in the workplace.

Phone: 780-427-3731 in Edmonton

Toll-free: 1-877-427-3731 in Alberta

Website: **alberta.ca/employmentstandards**



# Need help finding work? Explore alis.

[alis.alberta.ca/new](https://alis.alberta.ca/new)

Alis can help you plan for success no matter where you are in life. Are you wondering where to take your career or how to find a job? Is continuing education your next step? It is your path to plan. Start with alis.

**Plan**  
Your  
Career

**Explore**  
Education  
& Training

**Look**  
For  
Work

**Succeed**  
At  
Work

*Alberta*  
Government

**alis**

# Work Search Basics

If you are looking for your first job, have been away from the workforce for a long time or just aren't sure where to start in your work search, then this book can help you!

You'll discover how to

- identify your skills
- find job opportunities
- develop an effective resumé and cover letters
- network and do information interviews
- prepare for an interview
- stay positive



✓ HIRED!