

JOB SEARCH SKILLS & STRATEGIES

Many students feel that strong job search skills are only essential as they look for their first professional experience beyond college. They are both right and wrong. Although developing effective job search skills is vital to securing an initial post-collegiate position, continually updating these skills will make it easier to advance in and/or change career paths. Research demonstrates that most people have three different careers through their life times, work for approximately 10 different employers, and remain in each position for an average of 3.5 years. As you can see, developing and maintaining strong job search skills and strategies are crucial to a successful career.

WHERE AND WHEN TO BEGIN

1. Know yourself in terms of interests, values, and skills. Research whether or not various occupations and careers fit your interests, values, and skills.
 - Interests may include:
 - Major(s).
 - Minor(s).
 - Career areas.
 - Hobbies.
 - Preferences for working with people, data, or things.
 - Preferences for working alone or in a group.
 - What do you value?
 - Independence?
 - Prestige?
 - Variety?
 - Altruism?
 - Creativity?
 - Autonomy?
 - Security?
 - Personal or professional growth?
 - Environment?
 - Economic return?
 - Skills
 - Your skills may be field of study-specific and/or experience-specific.
 - They may also be transferable/functional.
2. Determine the criteria for an ideal position.
 - Areas to consider are: job content, work environment, organization size, location, corporate culture, compensation, flexibility, benefits, etc.
3. Know what industries interest you.

- Begin researching industry publications and employer websites.
4. Develop a clear job objective.
 - This should be based on information gathered by analyzing yourself and knowing the industries that interest you.
 5. Create appropriate job search documents (resume, portfolio, cover letter, etc.) and develop strong interviewing skills.
 - Tailor your resume and cover letter for the types of positions for which you are applying. You may need to create more than one.
 6. Studies show it takes an average of six to nine months to find the right job, thus, the ideal time to begin your job search is the ***beginning*** of your senior year. Actively embarking on your job search any later than this will probably result in your being unemployed upon graduation!

COLLEGE MAJORS AND JOB TITLES

Drawing too close of a connection between your major and future jobs can prove to be a stumbling block to the job search process. There are a number of factors beyond college major that determine job choice. Prior to beginning the job search, you need to be aware of the relationship between job title, job function, work environment, and industry. Job title refers to the actual position name used by an employer to label a specific job. Job titles also vary from employer to employer in scope, responsibility, and function. Job function describes the activities or tasks the person in the job does on a day-to-day basis. Job functions also define the kind of problem solving and communications between coworkers and supervisors. Work environment refers to the type of organization where the work takes place and where work tasks are performed – a private office, the “floor” of a manufacturing plant, in client offices, or “on the road.” Industry is a term that describes a series of related products or services that make up a portion of the overall economy. It is important to understand that a person can often perform the same work, have the same job title, and the same work environment in different industries.

RESEARCHING EMPLOYERS/COMPANIES/ORGANIZATIONS

Once you have assessed your interests, values, and skills; determined criteria for an ideal position; decided what industries interest you; developed a clear job objective; and created a first-class resume, cover letter, and/or portfolio, it is time to begin your job search in earnest. Your next step is to begin researching employers, companies, or organizations at which you would like to become employed. This will help you determine which employers would provide you rewarding and satisfying work experiences. Employer research resources include:

- Career Services’ Peer Advisors.

- Saluki Network Mentor Program.
- Morris Library.
- Alumni who work for the organization.
- Advisors/professors that may have connections or know alumni who work there.
- Internet.
- Annual Reports (if the organization is publicly held).
- Attending professional organization meetings.
- Networking with students who may have interviewed with the organization.
- Networking with professionals in the industry who may have knowledge about the organization.
- Current or former employees.
- Calling or emailing human resources departments to inquire about promotional materials.
- Attending a job fair in which the organization will be participating.
- Attending information sessions the night prior to job fairs or on-campus interviews.
- Business/industry publications.
- Newspapers.
- Informational interviews.
- Internships.
- Job shadowing.

JOB SEARCH ETIQUETTE

Below are a few job search etiquette tips which will demonstrate your professionalism to prospective employers.

- Make sure that your answering machine or voice mail messages are professional, not “cutsie” or too personalized.
- Be scrupulously honest in all correspondence and during interviews.
- Be respectful of the other person’s time.
- Always err on the side of addressing someone formally unless you are told otherwise.
- Always acknowledge an employer’s communication with you.
- If you miss a recruiter’s call, return it as soon as possible.
- Be prepared and on time for interviews.
- Respect deadlines—especially if you are entertaining multiple offers.
- Do not use an offer from one organization as leverage against another organization.
- Once you have accepted an offer, you must not interview with other organizations—this reflects badly on you as well as SIUC.
- Once you have accepted a position, you should remove yourself from consideration for other positions.
- If an employer with whom you interview tells you a hiring decision will be made in two weeks, and you do not hear from the employer in two weeks, it is appropriate to call her/him.
- Respond graciously to all offers whether you accept the position or not.
- Do not accept an offer and then turn it down at a later date.
- Never burn a bridge—you may need these contacts for networking purposes later in your career.
- Express genuine appreciation for the employer’s interest in you and your skills.

- Be sincere when accepting off-campus interviews and be reasonable about expenses.
- Brush up on dining etiquette.
- Do not forget thank you notes—for a person's willingness to help you network, providing contact names/information, and granting informational interviews, job interviews, etc.
- In order not to offend, research the cultural norms for that country if you are seeking an international position. Even in multinational companies, oftentimes local culture is the norm.

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Career Services

Building successful job search strategies begins with Career Services.

Registration

Registering with Career Services allows us to provide personalized and timely services to assist you in job and internship searches. Registered student services include:

- Access to our online job search engine, *Saluki Recruiting*. Typically, between 300 and 600 jobs/internships are listed on this site at any given time throughout the year.
- Personalized profiles for your job search that employers can view when searching for candidates to fill positions.
- Uploading resumes, cover letters, writing samples, certifications, or letters of recommendation into your personal account. These documents may be viewed by employers and are stored in the system so that users may apply for posted jobs.
- The ability to search and apply for jobs/internships online with a click of a button from your personalized account.
- Notification when employers are scheduled to interview on-campus.
- Ability to apply for on-campus interviews from any internet accessible computer.

- Email notifications when new jobs are posted that match your profile.

Job Fairs

Every spring and fall, Career Services hosts a Campus-Wide Job Fair as well as a Graduate and Professional School Fair. These fairs bring in employers and graduate schools from local, regional, and national venues. In addition, Career Services offers those interested in working in the educational field the opportunity to attend an annual Teacher Job Fair each spring.

Other colleges or departments on campus host job fairs throughout the year. These include the Accounting Fair, the Administration of Justice Fair, and the Aviation Fair.

Maximizing Job Fairs

General Tips

- Job fairs offer job seekers an excellent opportunity to interact with a large number of employers in a productive and very cost efficient manner.
- These events bring employers to a specific site for one or two days to meet with and answer questions for applicants.
- Some fairs are job/industry specific, such as technical or education fairs, while others include employers from a wide range of businesses and industries, government, and the private sector.
- Given that job fairs tend to be held in large rooms (arenas, convention centers, etc.) and there are likely to be a considerable number of job seekers in attendance, it is imperative that advance planning be conducted.

Preparation for the Job Fair

- Compose a quality resume to leave with employers as a business card so you may be better recalled and may be contacted after the fair. Bring multiple copies in a portfolio that contains a writing tablet, should you need to make notes.

- Think through and practice a 2-3 minute presentation of your qualifications and identify relevant questions you wish to ask the employer.
- Try to acquire the list of employer participants and the positions they have open in advance.
- Determine your wardrobe needs; interview attire is always the recommended dress.

The Day of the Job Fair – Checklist

- Dress professionally.
- Arrive early and stay as long as possible.
- Check in at the registration area to obtain an employer list, job descriptions and other posted information.
- Orient yourself to the facility. Locate recruiting/interviewing areas, restrooms and phones.
- Develop a plan allowing for breaks so you may feel alert throughout the day.
- Approach each employer and extend your hand for a firm handshake while maintaining eye contact.
- Be genuine, self-confident, pleasant and honest.
- Balance attentive listening with a display of your personality and achievements.
- Be an active participant and show interest by asking thoughtful questions.
- Always ask for business cards so you may follow-up.
- Meet with as many employers as possible. Often job seekers overlook excellent opportunities because there is no name recognition of the business, or there is the assumption that the employers would not have a need for the job seekers' skills.

- Pick up any additional literature on the organization to review if invited later for an interview.
- Always thank the employer for their time.
- Concisely "sell your skills", but do not monopolize time when others are waiting in line.

Sample Questions to Ask

- Will you tell me about the mission, functions, and career opportunities of your organization?
- What specific skills and qualifications are important for your jobs?
- Given my background in _____, how may I better compete for a job?
- What is the hiring process? When will you begin recruiting? How do you advertise openings?
- Do you provide training? Please describe.
- Describe initial assignments in my area of interest.
- How is job performance measured, evaluated and rewarded?
- Tell me about the work environment and organization's culture.
- Should I contact another person in your organization, and may I use your name as a reference source?

Follow Up

- Ask for a business card and send a courtesy/thank you letter to each employer with whom you spoke. Restate your interest in their opportunities, enclose a resume and request an interview.
- Maintain a log of dates and the results of each employment inquiry or communication.

Note: Check the CS web site for a listing of on-campus and nation-wide career fairs

On-Campus Interviews

Numerous employers conduct interviews on-campus during the fall and spring semesters seeking individuals for professional full-time employment, internships, and summer job programs. A listing of these employers, their job openings and requirements may be viewed on [SalukiRecruiting](#). This listing is updated twice weekly and new employers are continually added.

Eligibility

All current SIUC students have access into the Saluki Recruiting system on "browse" access. However, prior to scheduling an on-campus interview, you must first be deemed "interactive" within the Saluki Recruiting system. The following steps may be taken to apply for an on-campus interview.

Steps in Scheduling an On-Campus Interview

- Obtain a [SIUC email address](#)
- Obtain interactive status by having your [resume](#) critiqued and approved by a Career Services Specialist.
- Upload your approved resume into the Saluki Recruiting system.
- Utilizing Saluki Recruiting, search for on-campus interviews.
- Apply to interview for the desired position(s).

We recommend that you become acquainted with the Saluki Recruiting software and become proficient in its use. There is help available at the Career Services Computer Lab for uploading resumes and doing employer searches. The Computer Lab is open 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday. Help is available on a walk in basis. Students may access Saluki Recruiting at home once they have obtained a user ID and password. There is also an extensive help section in the Saluki Recruiting program. Students may access Saluki Recruiting from any computer with Internet connectivity by accessing our website.

No Show Penalty

Individuals who fail to appear for scheduled interviews do a great deal of harm to the reputation of the university. Employers are left with a negative image of SIUC students and feel their time has been wasted. Also, other students who may be on the waiting list

have been deprived of an interview. Therefore, any individual who schedules an interview must appear or cancel 24 hours in advance. Failure to do so will result in immediate suspension of interview and referral privileges. To request reinstatement of privileges, you must write a letter of apology to the employer and bring the letter and a stamped envelope to a meeting with your Career Services Specialist who will make the determination on your continued use of the services provided by Career Services.

Networking

Direct Employer Contact

Job Listings

Newspapers, professional journals or magazines, and other publications offer job listings. Newspapers only account for about 20% to 30% of the positions available in the job market. Jobs posted in newspapers are usually in high demand areas such as accounting, computers, technology, health care and sales.

Direct Mailings

Mailing resumes directly to potential employers who have not posted an available position can be risky. In order to increase your chances, your resume must specifically target the organization in which you are interested while your cover letter must be very specific in what type of position you are seeking. Furthermore, you must follow up each resume/cover letter with a telephone call or on-site visit.

Third-Party Agencies

Utilizing a search firm in your job search is literally paying someone else to do your leg-work. They are only loyal to themselves and are only interested in receiving compensation for their services. They want you (the applicant) to take whatever job you are interviewing for so they can receive their compensation. Most search firms work with only experienced professionals because they command a higher salary (hence a higher commission). Prior to deciding to use a search firm, first determine what fees are involved and who pays them.

The Internet

In today's age of technology, the Internet is a standard element in the job search. Individuals may post their resumes and apply for positions online, visit job search engines to look for available positions, and develop valuable online networking

contacts. However, relying too much on the World Wide Web to find a job may actually hamper your job search. As you are aware, the Internet is full of information, some good and some bad. You must be able to separate the good from the bad. The best strategy for integrating the Internet into your job search is to identify websites that are related to your specific career goals.

Searching for Jobs on the Internet

The best place to begin searching for jobs via the Internet is the Career Services website. Our website includes search engines and popular links listed in categories to assist you in organizing your search.

[Southern Illinois Job Links](#)

[Education Links](#)

[Business/Industry/ Government Links](#)

[Search Engines](#)

When using the Internet to search for available positions, do not forget to look on the websites of professional organizations. Most professional organizations have career sections on their websites where individuals may post resumes and search jobs.

Developing a Scannable or Text-based Resume

The function of a scannable or text-based resume is the same as that of a traditional resume – to help you get an interview! However, the design and format of a text resume is quite different than a traditional resume and it is critical that job seekers know how to prepare a text resume when using the Internet during the job search.

Format:

- Use one of the standard serif or sans serif typefaces, such as Courier, Times, Helvetica, Futura, Arial, Optima, Palatino, Univers. Avoid using decorative fonts.
- Use a normal type size, usually in the range of 11 to 14 points.
- Maximum number of characters per line is 65 (partly dependent on type size).
- Avoid graphics or shading.
- Keep formatting simple. Use all caps for major headings, but avoid bolding, italicizing, and underlining.

- Do not use bullets or lines.
- Left justify text.
- If your resume is more than one page, place your name at the top of each additional page.
- Print your resume on a high quality laser printer or inkjet. Do not use a dot matrix or low quality printer.
- Use only white or a very pale color paper -- in standard letter size (8 1/2 x 11).
- Always send original copies.
- Try to mail or deliver your resume in a flat envelop or by fax. Do not staple multiple page resumes.

Content:

The content of your scannable or text-based resume is the same as a traditional resume with the following exceptions:

- Use industry or job-specific keywords that employers might use to find candidates for the job you are seeking.
- While action verbs are still important, you need to add key phrases and nouns that could be used as search terms by your potential employer. Examples of phrases include "under budget," "surpassed goals," and "successfully developed." Examples of nouns include "HTML programming," "results oriented," "professional selling," "account manager," "marketing research," "strategic planning," and "certified public accountant (CPA)."
- After your objective, you might consider adding a "summary of accomplishments" section that focuses on results you achieved in your field rather than specific duties and responsibilities. A "Key Skills" section is also an option. The idea behind this section is to allow you to use more of the words, phrases, and jargon that resumes may be searched with by the potential employer.
- Maximize use of industry jargon (such as CAD for computer-assisted design), but when in doubt, it is best to use both abbreviations and write it out.

Considerations When Posting Resumes Online

- When posting a resume online, consider using a post office box or answering/paging service so your address and phone number are not available to just anyone.
- Attempt to ascertain the confidentiality of the database or service.
- Find out if you are able to update the resume at no additional cost.
- Does the online system delete outdated or non-renewed resumes? Reputable databases will delete after 3 months. Passwords are required to update or delete information.
- Update your resume every 30 days to bring your resume to the top of recruiters' lists.
- Use only a few resume databases—some recruiters will check to see if you have “spammed” all possible databases and this could affect their perception of you.
- Do not send the resume to all recruiters at a specific organization.
- Follow up an e-mailed resume with a hard copy.
- Be aware that third-party recruiters can keep you from getting the job you want. An agency may “pull” your resume from a job-listing site and send it to an employer you want to contact directly. If the agency's copy of your resume arrives at the organization before the copy that you sent—even if you have NOT given permission for your resume to be sent to the organization—the employer may look at the first resume they received. If the organization does not want to work with a third-party recruiter, then you may have lost an opportunity with that particular organization.
- An employer's website should state if sending your resume to their site actually causes the resume to be sent to a third-party resume database (and could potentially result in your resume making its way to other organizations who work with that database company).
- Data privacy law is still forming in many states, so using the Internet is not a perfect system.
- Do not rely solely on the Internet for your job search!

Benefits of Using the Internet During The Job Search

- Allows employers to see that you are “tech savvy” and recognize the important of the web.
- Gives you 24/7 access to employers.
- Poses no geographic limits.
- Provides networking experiences without initially meeting a contact.
- Allows you to explore career alternatives you may not have previously considered.
- Allows you to research employers and learn more about their organizations, determine if they have a job posting board, and obtain contact information if you would like to submit a resume.

E-Mail Etiquette

Improper e-mail etiquette will get you noticed by an employer quite readily—but noticed for all the wrong reasons!

- Make sure your e-mail address itself is professional and appropriate. Try to use a variation of your name.
- Include your name, address, and telephone number at the end of the e-mail so the employer has more than e-mail contact information.
- Run spell check prior to sending—e-mail correspondence should be as formal as correspondence you would send via regular mail.
- Do not save your resume/vita as “Resume.doc” because too many people do this. Include your name in the “save” title.
- If you need immediate information, call the employer.
- Follow-up with a thank you note via regular mail. However, an e-mail thank you is appropriate (1) if you will have a second interview before the recruiter could receive the note through the mail, (2) the recruiter is traveling and will not receive the note in a timely fashion, or (3) the recruiter is a computer-oriented person. It is appropriate to follow-up an e-mail thank you with one sent through the mail.
- Double check that any documents you send are virus-free.

- Format resumes in either Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format (RTF). PDF files may or may not be readable by some employers – you may want to ask what format works best if you are communicating with a recruiter.
- **NEVER** send jokes, chain letters, or other inappropriate e-mails.
- Hyperlink your e-mail address in your contact information at the bottom of your e-mail.
- Check your e-mail daily and respond to any messages from employers – or call if an immediate response is required.

TIPS FOR FINDING A JOB

- Don't wait for a job to find you!
- Think of the job search as a full-time job.
- Devote enough time for job search since finding a job is a full time job! Even if you cannot devote full time to your search, decide how much time you can realistically devote. Set up a schedule and stick to it.
- Develop an exemplary resume(s) and cover letter(s).
- Work on interviewing skills—participate in Career Services' mock interview program.
- Attend professional conferences.
- Approach your career as an entrepreneur.
- Learn how to be a “quick change artist” based on skills you have that are in demand.
- Consider working on a short-term, contractual basis.
- Anticipate having “multiple careers.”
- Explore nonprofit and government opportunities.
- Don't be afraid to start at a small firm.
- Be flexible.

- Develop specific skills for general application.
- Stay on top of shifting market demands.
- Be creative and take calculated risks!

MAINTAINING YOUR JOB SEARCH MOMENTUM

Persistence is a key element for a successful job search. Below are a few strategies you can use to avoid discouragement and a loss of momentum.

- ***Do not procrastinate!***
- Learn to cope with rejection. Be prepared for negative responses and learn not to take rejection personally.
- Find ways to handle stress. Make time to spend with friends, participate in activities, develop hobbies, and exercise.
- Develop a support group. Make contact with at least two or three people who support your goals.
- Set short-term goals. Breaking down your job search into a series of small steps will help you monitor your progress and provide a sense of satisfaction as you complete each task. \
- Avoid a "stop and start" job search. It is a mistake to focus all your attention on one job lead. Steady, continuous effort is the best.
- Reassess your job search progress. Are there unforeseen, difficult obstacles? Do certain skills need brushing up or do you need more information?

THE TOP JOB SEARCH MISTAKES

1. **Failure to network.**
2. **Failure to invest the time and effort to find the job/position that you really want.** Finding a full-time job is a full-time job. On average, an effective job search requires 30 to 35 hours per week.
3. **Failure to open-up geographically.** Considering going where the jobs are should be your first priority. If you are in a career field in which jobs are not so plentiful, you will need to consider relocating.

- 4. Failure to vary your search approach.** A “one-size-fits-all” resume and cover letter will not work for every job. You must “target” your job search documents and vary your job search strategies.

- 5. Failure to leave the attitude and image on-campus.** If you believe that you have “all the answers,” or that yours’ is the only bachelors (or masters) degree in the world, or that the world is waiting for you with open arms, you will be in for the shock of your life. Your days on-campus dressing the way you wanted, behaving the way you wanted, acting and reacting the way you wanted are gone forever and are not coming back. You must now start to create a more “professional image” because that is what potential employers will want to see.