

The
Career Services Office
Career Planning Guidebook

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Overview of Services

Individual Career Counseling

The Career Services Office offers individual career counseling for students who are undecided about their career paths. Students can schedule an appointment with a career counselor to:

- Assess interests, abilities, and values to determine occupational opportunities.
- Research career information and conduct informational interviews with professionals through LIONLINK.
- Observe a professional for a day through our shadowing program.

Career Resource Library

A large supply of books and pamphlets about occupations, employment outlook, salary surveys, and career planning strategies are located in the Career Resource Library.

Shadowing

Students may register to participate in a one day observation-oriented experience in an employment setting related to their career and educational goals. Many of the experiences include observation of, or participation in, daily operations of the organization.

Workshops

A wide range of career-related topics are presented by the Career Services Office staff. Examples include: "What's in a Resume and Cover Letter", "Tips for a Smooth Interview", and "Job Search Strategies".

Resume Critique

Students can set up an appointment to meet with a counselor to review their resume so that they can utilize this tool for their internship or job hunt.

Mock Interviews

Students can simulate a professional interview and improve the way they present themselves. The videotaped interview is replayed for visual feedback. In addition, the interviewer will provide students with a constructive evaluation.

Summer Work Experience

Counselors guide the student through the process of identifying potential employers that could provide relevant summer work experiences in the geographic region of the student's choice.

College Central Network

The Career Services Office utilizes College Central Network for on-line job postings. Students can register and upload their resumes and then search for job or summer work experience opportunities.

Career Fairs

University Park and Penn State Altoona hold career fairs where employers visit the college and talk to students regarding full-time job opportunities. Check College Central Network through the Career Services Office website for a schedule of career fair dates.

On-Campus Recruitment Program

Seniors are encouraged to participate in University Park and Penn State Altoona Recruitment programs. Students who would like to interview with a recruiter at University Park MUST visit the Career Services Office to pick up registration information.

Job Search

The job search can seem like a full-time job in itself. A Career Services counselor can help students by giving them useful tips and a variety of methods on how to conduct a successful job search.

Graduate School

Students needing information on the process of applying to graduate school can seek out a career counselor for assistance. Graduate school fairs are also posted on College Central Network through the Career Services Office website.

Career Planning for Life

Make Every Year a Career Planning Year

In order to make your college years successful, follow an easy career planning guide of activities.

FRESHMAN: Increase Self-Awareness

- Identify your interests, values, and abilities by talking to a career counselor.
- Test your interests through courses, volunteer jobs, student activities, and summer work.
- Contact alumni through [LIONLINK](#) and conduct informational interviews.

SOPHOMORE: Explore Relevant Work Experience

- Join student organizations relevant to your major.
- Explore and experience relevant summer jobs.
- Obtain information about occupations by using the Career Resource Library and by attending career fairs.
- Contact alumni through [LIONLINK](#) and conduct informational interviews.
- Participate in the Shadowing program.

JUNIOR: Prepare for the Professional World

- Explore and experience relevant summer jobs.
- Attend a resume and cover letter workshop.
- Simulate a mock interview.
- Attend career fairs to network with employers.
- Prepare for graduate school.

SENIOR: Implement Career Choices

- Attend career fairs at Penn State Altoona and University Park.
 - Participate in On-Campus Recruiting at University Park and Penn State Altoona.
 - Post your resume on [College Central Network](#).
 - Connect with a career counselor on job search strategies.
-

Resumes and Cover Letters

Creating Your Resume

Purpose of a Resume

A resume is a written communication that highlights your education, experience, and qualifications to produce results for an employer. Your resume is a sales tool that introduces you to the employer and is a sample of how you communicate. Its sole purpose is to assist you in obtaining a personal interview.

Creating Your Resume

What you may want to include in your resume:

1. **Personal Information:** Name, Permanent Address and Current Address (if applicable), telephone number(s), and e-mail address if you use your account regularly.
2. **Objective:** One or two concise statements focusing on the type of position you are seeking, the skills you want to utilize, and/or the tasks in which you want to become involved.
3. **Education:** Name of college(s), location, dates, majors, honors/awards. Honors and awards may be a separate section if you have several of them. You should include your GPA if it is a 3.0 or higher. You may include your GPA in your major too. Course work or class projects are sometimes included if they are relevant to the job you are seeking and may be placed in a separate section if desired.
4. **Work Experience:** Show experience in reverse chronological order by putting most recent positions first. Separate "Related Experience" (internships, work experience, volunteer work) and "Work Experience" (part-time, summer jobs). Put action verbs first and give details of accomplishments and responsibilities and use quantifiable statements that enhance credibility. Avoid repetition. Focus on your strengths, skills, and accomplishments.
5. **Activities:** List the most relevant activities and offices held first. Include college, community, and professional activities.
6. **Skills:** You may want to consider a special skills section to highlight specific computer hardware or software, foreign languages spoken fluently, or machinery required for performance on the job. Certifications could be included here or in a separate category if there are a number of them.
7. **References:** Most resumes state that references are available upon request. If an employer requests references, you need to prepare a separate reference page.

This packet includes copies of a few sample resumes to help you create your resume with its own unique format. Chronological and functional resumes are two formats to consider.

Chronological:

Present education is listed followed by present and previous work experience. Most recent jobs are listed first and then previous job experiences are listed (reverse chronological order). Under each entry, responsibilities and achievements are listed. This is an appropriate format if you have experience directly related to your career goal.

Functional:

If you use this format, your experience is explained under major skill headings, while job titles, employers, and dates are listed separately. This type of resume is especially useful when your work experiences are not directly related to your career objective and shows that you have obtained transferable skills.

Tips for preparing your resume:

1. There is no one way to organize a resume, but they should be neat and appealing to the eye. There should not be any spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.
2. Use quality bond paper (24#). Cream, gray, and beige are all conservative colors of paper that are acceptable. Do not fold or staple your resume.
3. The layout should be simple and well organized. Good spacing, margins, and headings contribute to appearance and readability. Use creativity in layout, white space, and margins for optimal graphic appeal. By being "eye catching," a resume may separate itself from others in the morning mail.
4. Verb phrases should be skill-based; avoid using personal pronouns.
5. Your resume should be kept to one page if possible. When you have more than one page, the second page should include your name and the pages should be numbered. The two pages should not be stapled but can be paper clipped together.
6. It is recommended that the resume be printed on a laser printer or high quality ink jet printer.
7. When possible, the resume should be targeted toward a particular type of job.
8. Look at a number of sample resumes to get ideas about style, layout, and content. Then you can create your own style. Avoid using resume programs because they are redundant in style for readers.
9. Avoid personal information that has no impact upon your ability to do the job. (Age, marital status, sexual preference, religion, etc.)
10. Use action verbs to show professional accomplishments.

Sample verbs include the following:

Administered	Directed	Instructed	Presented
Advised	Edited	Interpreted	Processed
Analyzed	Enforced	Maintained	Produced
Assisted	Established	Managed	Promoted
Calculated	Estimated	Mentored	Publicized
Collected	Evaluated	Monitored	Reduced
Communicated	Examined	Negotiated	Researched
Completed	Expanded	Observed	Revised
Computed	Facilitated	Obtained	Solved
Conducted	Financed	Ordered	Studied
Coordinated	Handled	Organized	Supervised
Counseled	Implemented	Participated	Trained
Created	Improved	Performed	Translated
Demonstrated	Increased	Planned	Tutored
Developed	Initiated	Predicted	Updated
Diagnosed	Installed	Prepared	Wrote

The next five pages are samples of chronological and functional resumes.

Chronological

Engineering	Page 8
Criminal Justice	Page 9
Human Dev. and Family Studies	Page 10
Nursing	Page 11

Functional

Business	Page 12
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CHRIS R. STUDENT

crs141@psu.edu

TEMPORARY ADDRESS:

(Until May 10, 20xx)
102 Oak Hall
Penn State Altoona
Altoona, PA 16601
(814) 940-6720

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

711 Hunter Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 644-3777

OBJECTIVE:

To apply work and academic experience in Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Technology with interests in process and product engineering.

EDUCATION:

The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona College, Altoona, PA
B.S. Electro-Mechanical Engineering Technology, May 20xx
A.E.T. Mechanical Engineering Technology, May 20xx
GPA: 3.36

RELEVANT PROJECTS:

- Designed and implemented a PLC program to operate a four-way intersection traffic light
- Created a calculator using integrated circuit chips that was operable
- Developed a PLC program to implement a plating process using different metals
- Developed a manufacturing monitoring system as a senior design team project

COMPUTER SKILLS:

AutoCAD	Microsoft Word	Microsoft PowerPoint
C++	Microsoft Access	Microsoft Project
Turbo Pascal	Microsoft Excel	Visual Basic

EXPERIENCE:

Manufacturing Process Intern May 20xx - August 20xx
McNeil Consumer Products Co., Altoona, PA

- Implemented Statistical Process Control into the manufacturing process
- Troubleshoot in the processing and packaging of over-the-counter pharmaceutical areas
- Wrote standard operating procedures for production floor that were reviewed and approved by the Food & Drug Administration
- Combined efforts with Quality Assurance, Research and Development, and Engineering to implement new processes
- Installed, inspected, and validated upgrades to control systems and equipment

Assistant Manager January 20xx – January 20xx
Shop ‘n Save, Pittsburgh, PA

- Supervised front line staff and managed operations in supervisor’s absence
- Interviewed, hired, and trained new employees and provided feedback on performance
- Developed system for monitoring specialty item inventory that decreased inventory time by 50% and increased sales by 25%

ACTIVITIES:

American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Vice President
Phi Sigma Kappa National Fraternity, Tutor
Intramural Sports: softball, football, hockey, soccer

REFERENCES:

Available Upon Request.

Student X. Sample

xyz789@psu.edu

Temporary Address

210 Oak Hall
Penn State Altoona
Altoona, PA 16601
814-940-5555

Permanent Address

1 Main Street
Altoona, PA 16601
814-949-4644

OBJECTIVE

To apply academic and employment experience in the field of criminal justice with interest in juvenile crime

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona College, Altoona, PA
Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, May 20xx
GPA: 3.65

COURSE PROJECTS

- Presented paper on "The Effects of Television Violence on Teens" during regional conference
- Wrote a paper on "Vigilantism in America"

SPECIAL SKILLS

Fluent in Spanish, French, and Portuguese

EXPERIENCE

Intern

Blair County Juvenile Detention Center

Fall 20xx
Altoona, PA

- Shadowed deputy police officers to observe routine operations
- Participated in court room procedures
- Observed apprehension and arrest procedures for juvenile offenders
- Reviewed current cases to build familiarity with professional jargon
- Maintained strict level of confidentiality at all times

Sales Associate

K-Mart

June 20xx–August 20xx
Altoona, PA

- Achieved high employee reviews consistently
- Reported problems and concerns to supervisor
- Received and resolved customer complaints and problems
- Trained five new employees in store procedures and policies

ACTIVITIES

Penn State Altoona Mock Trial participant
Penn State Altoona Community Night Watch

REFERENCES

Available Upon Request.

MELONIE KITTY

3000 Ivy Lane
Altoona, PA 16601
814-949-6785
mk2@psu.edu

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a human services position with interests in gerontology and research.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Blair County Human Services

Editor and Victim Advocate

May 20xx – July 20xx

- Interviewed elderly victims of abuse and wrote a humanistic article for the “Altoona Mirror”
- Organized a Take Back the Night event that involved 20 volunteers and 200 participants
- Coordinated field trips for elderly residents to community events

WORK EXPERIENCE

Community Nursing Service

Home Health Aide

April 20xx – September 20xx

- Assisted elderly with daily living activities
- Observed and documented client’s mental and physical condition

COMPUTER SKILLS

Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint

COURSE PROJECTS

- Researched and wrote a paper on “Cultural Diversity”
- Initiated a support group for faculty and staff at the college to discuss aging parents as part of an independent study

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

ANTS(Adult Non-Traditional Student) club member

- Assisted with fundraising events for the club
- Spoke to returning adult students at the college’s open house events
- Acted as a mentor to other returning adults coming back to college
- Volunteered at the Presbyterian Home to assist with activities for the residents

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona College, Altoona, PA

Bachelor of Science, Human Development and Family Studies, May 20xx

Concentration: Adult Development and Aging Services

Associate of Arts, Letters, Arts, and Sciences, May 20xx

Gerontology Certificate, December 20xx

GPA: 3.4

REFERENCES

Available On Request

SUSAN B. NURSE
nursesusan@hotmail.com

Temporary Address
(Until May 4, 20xx)
123 Allen Street
Altoona, PA 16601
(814) 949-6543

Permanent Address
12 Oneida Avenue
Altoona, PA 16002
(814) 949-4567

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a registered nurse position with an interest in pediatrics.

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona College, Altoona, PA
A.S. in Nursing, May 20xx
GPA: 3.45

LICENSURE

NCLEX taken July 20xx in Harrisburg, PA

EXPERIENCE

Pharmacy Technician

Giant Foods

May 20xx – August 20xx
Huntingdon, PA

- Converted brand name prescriptions to generic equivalent
- Ordered, prepared, and distributed pharmaceuticals under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist
- Processed customer refill orders using Giant Foods computer program
- Provided quality customer service
- Communicated in a professional manner with clients over the phone

Emergency Responder

Volunteer Fire Company

May 20xx – August 20xx
Johnstown, PA

- Provided medical services to patients
- Communicated with dispatch patients' vital signs

SPECIAL SKILLS

Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint
Fluent in Spanish and French

REFERENCES

Available Upon Request

Karen Marie Functional

1212 Main Street
Altoona, PA 16602
(814) 949-0055
kmf21@psu.edu

OBJECTIVE

Outside sales rep. with a manufacturer or distributor involving direct sales or account management.

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Seven years of successful experience in direct outside sales.
- One of the top sales staff with Coca-Cola.
- Number one sales with Smith Corona eastern region.
- Highly motivated sales rep. that sets and reaches goals.
- Proven skills in problem solving and customer relations.

SALES EXPERIENCE

Direct Sales & Account Management

- Trained new sales representatives for developing new and existing territories at both Smith Corona and Coca-Cola.
- Achieved status of top saleswoman in the region with Coca-Cola.
- Sold more coolers than any other sales rep.
- Personalized customer relations by calling them on a weekly basis.
- Maintained good relations and continually reviewed customers' needs.
- Designed customized exterior and interior signs featuring customers' products.

Problem Solving & Customer Service

- Increased Smith Corona's territory sales by 120%.
- Identified customers' specific needs and proposed more cost-effective alternatives.
- Demonstrated opportunities to save time and money in office billing procedures.
- Revised and automated clients' billing systems.
- Sold new copying equipment required to operate newly installed systems.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Served one term on community service clean-up board.
- Served as coordinator for March of Dimes walk-a-thon.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Sales Representative, Smith Corona Office Products, Ebensburg, PA (January 20xx – Present)

Product Representative, Coca Cola Bottling, Johnstown, PA (June 20xx – September 20xx)

Sales Clerk, J.C. Penny Co., Altoona, PA (February 20xx – May 20xx)

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona College, Altoona, PA

Bachelor of Science in Business, Concentration: Management/Marketing, December 20xx GPA: 3.25

REFERENCES

Available Upon Request.

Scannable Resumes

Tips for preparing a resume to be scanned:

1. Resumes are searched by "key words" that the computer has been programmed to find. Action verbs are not useful during the scan, but they should be included for when the employer reads the resume. You must be sure to include "key words" that are important in your field.
2. "Key words" may include your degree, job titles, number of years of experience, specific tasks required for your job, professional associations, etc. For example, key words for an accountant might include Bachelor of Science in Accounting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, etc.
3. Simplicity in your resume is needed:
 - Your name should be the first readable item on each page, on its own line
 - Use non-decorative typefaces, 11-14 point in size
 - Use cream or gray paper of standard size and provide laser-printed original
 - Avoid italics, script, bold, and underlined passages (use capitalization instead)
 - Do not compress spaces between letters
 - Do not use horizontal or vertical lines (including underlining), or bullets, boxes, etc.
 - Do not fold or staple your resume. Place the resume and cover letter in a flat envelope and paper clip them together.
 - List each phone number on its own line (for example, a work phone and home phone)

Tips for preparing a resume to be sent via E-mail/Internet:

(Most word processors and resume writing programs will let you save a file to plain text, also called ASCII or DOS text. Do not use word processed or PostScript files.)

1. After creating your resume and checking for errors, print a copy of the resume and then make a copy of the computer file. Name it resume.txt and tell the program to save this to plain text.
2. Using any text editor, even your word processor, edit the resume.txt file to resemble your printed resume. Redo the spacing using the space bar and add some unique characters to highlight your skills, etc., just like you did before. Remember that you may need to alter the margins for the e-mail. Figure no more than 70 characters across the screen. Save this copy as text.
3. Save both copies of the files on a diskette.
4. Send your resume to yourself or a friend to see how it looks when it is received. Do not send the resume as an attachment; send it as the body of your message.
5. Do not use bold, underline, or bullets. Suggestions for options:
 - use asterisks (*) or plus (+) signs instead of bullets
 - use capital letters or asterisks to surround the text instead of using bold

Cover Letter Format

Your Present Address
City, State Zip
Date of Letter

Individual's Name
Title
Company/Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear _____:

First Paragraph: Indicate the reason for writing, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying, and the way in which you learned about the position opening or the company.

Second Paragraph: Explain why you are interested in the particular position, the company or organization, and the products/services of the organization. Above all, indicate what you can do for the company—tell them how you can benefit their company and what you can do for them. If you have recently graduated, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for this position. If you have had some practical work experience, point out special achievements or qualifications that relate to the advertised position.

Third Paragraph: Indicate your desire for a personal interview at their convenience. Indicate the best time to contact you and include your phone number.

Sincerely,

Wanda B. Employed

Enclosure

Sample Cover Letter

1500 Walnut Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602
November 20, 20xx

Mr. James Smith
Personnel Manager
American Investors, Inc.
5240 Pacific Drive
Atlanta, GA 42111

Dear Mr. Smith:

Please accept the enclosed application for the Assistant Manager position. I read about the position with American Investors, Inc. in the *Altoona Mirror* on February 23, 20xx.

On May 5, 20xx, I obtained my Bachelor of Science in Business degree from Penn State Altoona. I have been employed in several small businesses. Through my internship, I had the opportunity to become involved in problem solving, reduction strategies, scheduling, and long range planning from the small business perspective.

I would enjoy the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further through a personal interview. I can be reached anytime at (814) 949-5555. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Wanda B. Employed

Enclosure

Other Letters

The following represent other types of correspondence that you might find appropriate at various stages in your job search. In each instance, these letters should be individually typed and addressed and should conform to the applicable standards previously discussed for the preparation of cover letters. Use business letter format with your address and the date in the upper right, and the person's name and address on the left above the body of the letter.

Thank You Letter

After you have had a campus interview or visit, a letter should be sent to express your appreciation for the opportunity to present yourself.

1. Within 24 – 48 hours after the interview or visit, a letter should be sent to express your appreciation for the opportunity to present yourself.
2. Use the letter to express your continued interest in the position and company. Some details of things that impressed you are a nice way to personalize your letter and convey your interest.
3. Supply any additional information that was requested at the time of the visit or interview.

Example

I appreciated the opportunity to talk with you last Tuesday afternoon regarding employment as a Manager Trainee. As I indicated during the interview, I believe my achievements at Penn State as well as my work experience make me a strong candidate. If I can provide you with any additional information to help you in your decision making process, please contact me at 814-949-5000.

Letter of Acceptance (of second interview or job offer)

Be businesslike but also tailor your letter to the specific employer, so you appear sincere and genuinely interested in the company and job. Never simply copy example letters.

1. Write to the person who wrote and/or interviewed you.
2. Thank the person and/or show your enthusiasm for the offer.
3. State what you are accepting.
4. Concisely yet descriptively give some details about what has impressed you about the company and/or interview.

Example

I am quite pleased to accept your offer of a job as a *(title)* starting *(date)*. The details of the position sound challenging, especially *(some details)*. The individuals I met who are to be my co-workers helped me feel very welcome. I look forward to joining the staff and will be calling in a week as you requested to arrange travel and moving details.

Letter Declining an Offer

It is courteous to turn down a plant trip or job offer graciously.

1. Write to the person who wrote you.
2. Thank her/him for the offer.
3. Briefly state that you are declining and why (don't get too personal).

Never copy these example letters below, inserting details. If companies get identical letters they may question who is doing the writing and your sincerity.

Example

Thank you for your invitation of a plant trip on *(date)*. Although I was quite interested in *(company name)*, I have accepted a position with another company in my hometown, so I will not be accepting your invitation. I appreciated the opportunity to interview with *(name of recruiter)* and was especially impressed with (your training program, the job description, size of company, etc.)

Professional References

Always prepare 3-5 professional (not personal) references on a separate sheet of paper. Good references to include are previous employers, professors you have worked with closely, advisors of activities you have participated, former internship supervisors, and volunteer supervisors. Always ask the person you would like to use as a reference prior to including them on your reference sheet. Also be sure to provide each person with a copy of your resume.

Below is a sample format for arranging your professional references:

John M. Student

3 Good Lane
Altoona, PA 16601
814-949-5000

Professional References

Dr. Brian O'Hare, Professor
Department of Natural Sciences
Penn State Altoona
3000 Ivyside Park
Altoona, PA 16601
814-949-0000

Reference #2
Company
Address
City, State Zip
Phone

Reference #3
Company
Address
City, State Zip
Phone

Resources Available in the Career Resource Library (126 Slep)

- America's Top Resumes for America's Top Jobs; Farr, Michael J., 1998
- Blue Collar Resumes; Provenzano, CPRW, Steven, 1999
- Cover Letters that Knock 'Em Dead; Yate, Martin, 1998
- Developing a Professional Vita or Resume; McDaniels, Carl, 1997
- Dynamite Resumes; Krannich, Ph.D's, Ron and Caryl, 1997
- Gallery of Best Cover Letters; Noble, David F., 1999
- Gallery of Best Resumes; Noble, David F., 2001
- How to Prepare Your Curriculum Vitae; Jackson, Acy L., 1997
- Just Resumes; Martin, Kim, 1997
- Resumes & Job Search Letters for Transitioning Military Personnel; Savino, Major USAR, Carl S. & Krannich, Ph.D, Ronald L., 1998
- Resumes for Business Management Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 2000
- Resumes for Communications Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 1998
- Resumes for Engineering Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 2000
- Resumes for Environmental Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 1994
- Resumes for High Tech Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 1992

Resources Available in the Career Resource Library (continued)

- The Overnight Resume; Asher, Donald, 1999
- Your First Resume; Fry, Ron, 1996
- Resumes for Law Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 1995
- Resumes for Nursing Careers; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 1997
- Resumes for Education Majors; The Editors of VGM Career Books, 1999
- Resumes that Knock 'Em Dead; Yate, Martin, 1998
- Asher's Bible of Executive Resumes and How to Write Them; Asher, Donald, 1996
- From College to Career: Entry-Level Resumes for Any Major from Accounting to Zoology; Asher, Donald, 1999-2000

Interview Skills

The First Interview

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW?

The interview is the most important step in the job search process. To interview effectively, you need to obtain information about the employer, the kind of position you want, and an understanding of your career interests and aspirations. Being able to answer questions with supportive details and in a conversational manner is very important. Hence, thorough preparation is essential.

All interviewers have two major questions in mind: (1) how well suited are you for the job, and (2) are you genuinely interested in the employer and position? They are trying to get enough information about your background, strengths and level of interest to answer these questions. In addition, as a prospective employee, you need to be learning as much as you can about the position and work place so you can decide if they are what you want.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT IN AN INTERVIEW?

You need to be ready to handle a variety of interview formats, from the highly structured to the unstructured type. Most initial 30 minute interviews are semi-structured and include:

- ice breaking: 2-5 minutes
- interviewer's questions: 10-12 minutes
- applicant's questions: 8-10 minutes
- closing remarks: 2-3 minutes

Most interviewers are friendly and want you to feel relaxed. There are many styles of interviewing, just as there are many styles of teaching, and you will feel more comfortable talking with some recruiters than others.

WHAT IS THE INTERVIEWER LOOKING FOR?

On-campus recruiters at Penn State are asked on their checkout forms, "What was most impressive about your best interviewees?" Several categories are mentioned repeatedly:

1. **PREPARED.** Knowledge of, and interest in the employer.
 - "Had researched our company and was prepared with questions about job duties and how she would be evaluated."
 - "Had a genuine interest (as opposed to I need any job) in my company."
 - "The interviewee was prepared with intelligent questions that he had written down."
2. **PERSONALITY.** Confidence, friendliness, enthusiasm, poise, assertiveness.
 - "Showed enthusiasm for an opportunity to work in an area he had studied and liked."
 - "Sincere and honest. Not a 'snow job'."
3. **CAREER GOALS.** Have specific areas of interest in mind.
 - "They had a definite idea of what they wanted. They demonstrated this in the nature of their direct questions."
4. **COMMUNICATION SKILLS.** Nonverbal skills, such as good posture, eye contact, and tone of voice are as crucial as content of conversations.
 - "Relaxed, smiled, and appeared to be following what was said. Gave the impression of being compatible with fellow employees."
 - "Gave specifics and examples that were relevant but did not ramble."
5. **APPEARANCE.** Neat, professional dress. Not overly flashy or made up.
6. **EXPERIENCE.** Awareness of own skills and how they relate to the world of work.
 - "The best candidates were active in sports, clubs, or had work experience. They were comfortable interacting with people."

HOW CAN I BEST PREPARE?

Do research – on yourself, first. Know what kind of job you want, why you want it, and what makes you feel qualified. Think about what information you want to include in your responses. Don't go in "cold" and expect to do well, but don't memorize, either.

You must come to the interview able to discuss a clearly defined, realistic career objective related to the employer and the position for which you are interviewing. Willingness to do anything suggests a lack of preparation, self-knowledge, and decision-making abilities – any of which will knock you out of the running.

Some typical questions related to career goals are:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want this job?
- How did you get interested in this career field?

You will also need to provide evidence of your skills, background, and experiences as they relate to the needs of the job and the employer. Be prepared to discuss questions about your educational background, activities in which you were involved, work experience, and how these experiences have prepared you to be successful at the career you are seeking. You will need to discuss specific work tasks or courses and the skills you developed through them. Key is the use of examples to support your claims of skills.

Some typical questions related to your skills and experiences are:

- Why do you think you would be a good fit for this job?
- Is your GPA an accurate reflection of your abilities?
- What's the most important thing you've learned through your education?
- What accomplishment(s) in your previous work experiences were recognized by your supervisors?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an important decision. How did you decide?
- What is the most significant contribution you made to the company during your internship/co-op?
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to our company?

Do research – on the career field. Most first time job seekers do not realize the importance of knowing about the job they will be performing. In many ways, you will not be able to effectively answer questions related to your interest in the field if you know very little about the field. In general, you should have an understanding of what you would be doing on a daily basis, typical responsibilities, skills needed for success on the job, and possible career paths. Again, a lack of preparation in this area suggests to an employer that you may lack commitment to the field.

Some typical questions related to career field are:

- Why are you interested in this field?
- What do you think will be the most difficult aspects of this job?
- What will you enjoy most about this job?

Do research – on the employer. First get the basics, including the organization's size, location(s), product(s), or service(s). Then look for details relevant to the position you seek: job description, training, advancement paths, etc. You may need to look several places to get this information, including:

- Contact the local Chamber of Commerce or the organization's public relations or personnel department.
- Talk with someone in the organization who is in the type of position of interest to you.

Things you should know about an employer:

- Major products or services
- Size in terms of sales and employees
- Locations
- Organization of the company
- Major competitors
- View of the company by clients, suppliers, and competition
- Latest news reports on the company or local, state, or national news that affects the company

Things you should know about an employer (continued):

- History of the company
- Growth pattern
- Assets and earnings
- New products or projects

Use Career Services: Take advantage of the variety of free services available at Career Services:

1. Review a 14 minute interview skills videotape to learn the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) technique. Ask for "Marketing Your Liberal Arts Skills in the Interview" from the staff person.
2. You can also practice your interviewing techniques. To make an appointment for a mock interview, see the staff assistant in 126 Slep.
3. Meet with a career counselor to discuss your concerns, experiences and questions.

Interview Questions**WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH TO ANSWERING QUESTIONS?**

Recruiters typically interview 8 to 12 candidates per day and face the difficult task of deciding which ones would probably perform the best on the job. Therefore, their questions are asked in order to gain a "feel" for who you are and what makes you unique-your motivation level, your background and strong points, your genuine interest in the position, and the aspects of your personality or character that can affect how you perform on the job.

Recruiters are surprisingly accurate in sensing "canned" answers. These canned responses don't convey interesting or reliable information about you. When you answer, remember these guidelines:

There is no single right answer. It's often how you answer that is more important than the exact content.

Be honest. Don't pretend, for example, that you were sure about your major from the very start if, in fact, you weren't. The details about how you did choose your major may be much more interesting and communicate some very positive things about how you make decisions.

Give details and examples. General responses become boring and don't help the recruiter get to know you. You need to be specific. Details illustrate your points and make answers more vivid and memorable. Therefore, when discussing one of your strengths, give an example or two illustrating that strong point. When mentioning the course you liked most, give some details to illustrate what you liked and why. Stay focused and don't ramble. Give details that are relevant but don't start telling long stories that include unnecessary details. Some candidates also make the mistake of repeating themselves when they haven't thought of how to wrap up the answer. Respond directly and succinctly.

Keep the position in mind. What details can you give that are relevant to the type of job you are interested in? When you can think of some, try to remember to include them. For example, if you worked at a summer camp and are now looking for a sales position, you can mention how you were successful at persuading the participants to enjoy your programs.

Job Interview Questions

The following questions are among the most typically asked questions during a job interview. Employers are usually trying to find out more about you and how you think.

- Why should I hire you?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What are your greatest weaknesses?
- Tell me about yourself.
- How would someone who knows you describe you?
- What motivates you?
- Why did you choose your school?
- What have you contributed to your previous jobs that made you a valuable asset to the company?
- Do you have any supervisory experience? Tell me about it.
- What skills, experience or training do you have that makes you stand out from the other candidates?
- Tell me about your communication skills (Give examples).
- Tell me about your teamwork skills (Give examples).
- What are some of the most challenging situations that you have faced during your college years?
- Tell me how your college education has changed you.
- How do your classes relate to this position?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in our company?
- How do you evaluate or determine whether or not you are successful?
- If hired, what kinds of immediate contributions could you make to our company?
- If you could change anything about your college classes, what would you change?
- If you could change anything about your college experience, what would you change?
- What courses did you like the most? Why?
- What courses did you dislike the most? Why?
- If you were hiring someone in this position, what qualities would you look for?
- Do you like to travel?
- Do you have a geographic preference for your job? Why?
- Will you relocate? Does relocation concern you?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable? (casual, formal, open-door, high stress, etc)
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What clubs/organizations do you belong to?
- What are your hobbies?
- What volunteer work have you done in the past?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What are your salary requirements?
- Do you have any questions for me? (always have some questions prepared).

WHAT TYPES OF QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION TO MAKE THE BEST IMPRESSION?

You make the best impression if you ask questions concerning the organization and job in which you have a sincere interest. Make certain you do thorough research on the organization prior to your interview so your questions reflect your knowledge of and interest in the organization. What do you want to know more about? Don't be afraid to be specific, because specific questions convey genuine interest.

Some good questions to ask include:

- If hired, would I be filling a newly created position, or replacing someone?
- Was my predecessor promoted?
- Would you describe a typical work day and the things I would be doing?
- Which duties are most important for this job? Least important?
- How would I be trained or introduced to the job?
- How long should it take me to get my feet on the ground and become productive?
- How is the job important to the company?
- What are the department's goals for the year?
- How many people work in your department? In the company?
- Who are the people I would be working with and what do they do?
- How would I get feedback on my job performance, if hired?
- If hired, would I report directly to you, or to someone else?
- Has the company had a layoff in the last three years? If so, how long was the layoff and was everyone recalled?
- What major markets does this company (or parent company) compete in?
- If you were to offer me this job, where could I expect to be in five years?
- Could you give me a brief tour? I'd enjoy seeing where your people work.
- What will next steps be in the interviewing process? When will second interviews be conducted for the position?

If many of your questions have been answered by good organizational literature, tell the recruiter, mentioning some of the more important questions and perhaps even briefly summarizing what you have learned.

Stay away from questions about benefits and salary until the second interview.

WHAT REASONS DO RECRUITERS GIVE FOR REJECTING CANDIDATES?

1. **Lack of knowledge and preparation.** Unaware about the company, career, and/or industry in which candidate professes to have an interest.
2. **No career direction.** Have no idea what they want in a job. Unable to show how their skills and experiences prepared them for work in any field.
3. **No enthusiasm.** Answers often short. Tone of voice lacks interest or color.
4. **Vague answers.** No details given, words are general and not relevant to the type of job.
5. **Very fidgety.** Little eye contact, many nervous mannerisms, such as playing with hair, rubbing hands, etc.
6. **Know-it-all attitude.** Lack sincerity. Try to show off all they know about the field. Make superficial remarks to impress the interviewer.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Send a thank you note within 24 hours of the visit itself – reaffirm your interest in the position.
- The interview is a two-way conversation. Try to relax and enjoy the opportunity.
- Don't be vague, be specific. You'll be much more interesting.
- Think about your answers ahead of time. Don't memorize, but have a focus and don't ramble.
- Be prepared to describe why you are interested in that employer and give specific characteristics about the kind of position you want.
- Sell yourself. If you don't state what your strengths, skills, and accomplishments are, the recruiter will be unable to sell you as a good candidate.
- Genuine self-confidence and confidence in your ability to perform well at the job are your best assets in any interview. This attitude of confidence is one of the best indicators to the employer that you are the person needed for the position.

The Second Interview

Congratulations, you have been invited for a second interview! You have made a good first impression during your initial interview; otherwise, you would not have been invited.

The purpose of the day is for you and the employer to get to know each other better and for both of you to decide if there is an appropriate match. It is your opportunity to meet the people you might work with, to see the facility, and to discuss your special strengths and interests in greater detail than the screening visit allowed.

Keep in mind that although you made it through the initial screening, a job offer is not automatic. Employers invite more candidates for site visits than they intend to hire. The employer will try to ensure that you are impressed with the people, the facility, and their career opportunities. Here are some tips to ensure they are equally impressed with you.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

While it is not possible to outline the typical day, here are some possible scenarios for the day's events.

- An interview schedule in advance or when you arrive on site.
- A company representative to meet you for dinner or breakfast or making your own arrangements to find your way to the office/plant.
- In some cases you will be the only candidate there or you may be part of a group.
- Multiple interviews with various managers, employees or teams, a few individual interviews with time for business simulation activities, or a combination of both.
- More in-depth questioning than in first interviews.
- An expectation that you will ask many questions.
- Interviewing over a meal...and no matter how casual and informal the organization's employees act, **YOU ARE STILL INTERVIEWING!**
- The possibility of testing, usually directly related to the job's requirements (e.g., a writing assignment for a technical writing position, case studies, math, psychological, and occasionally foreign language examinations.) Note: prepare by finding out in advance if there will be any testing; there is rarely any value in studying for these tests.
- While an offer may be tendered at the end of the site visit, you should not count on it. Ask the employer when you can expect a decision.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE?

Now that you have made it past the prescreening interview, you will have an opportunity to learn more in-depth about the organization and to share more in-depth what you can contribute to the position. The preparation checklist provided below will help you make the most of this opportunity.

PREPARATION CHECKLIST FOR THE SECOND INTERVIEW:

- ___ Re-examine your resume and know the three to five points you want to communicate about yourself in relation to the job.
- ___ Conduct even more research than you did for the first interview. Analyze your potential employer thoroughly and become very familiar with their homepage.
- ___ Talk with someone at the company and in the field to learn more about the position and the organization.
- ___ Review interview questions and schedule a mock interview with a Career Services staff member.
- ___ Ask the employer how many interviews you will have, how long they will be, the job titles of your interviewers, etc.
- ___ Prepare different kinds of questions for employees with different roles. A lack of quality questions implies insufficient interest in the position, so prepare more questions than you did for the first interview. You may want to have your questions written down.
- ___ Discuss travel arrangements/reimbursements with the employer. In the vast majority of cases, the employer will pay all reasonable expenses incurred in traveling to their location. However, it is your responsibility to verify (before you go) exactly what expenses are to be covered and how.
- ___ Know where you are going ahead of time and make appropriate travel arrangements either independently or through the employer. If the interview is local, you may want to do a dry run.
- ___ Gather the appropriate materials to bring with you. Take extra copies of your resume, a notepad, an unofficial transcript and a typed list of references with addresses and phone numbers. A leather or vinyl portfolio holds these items nicely.
- ___ Research salary trends by using on-line resources and the Salary Survey guide published by the National Association of Colleges and Employers that is found in the Career Library in 122A Slep.
- ___ Send a thank you note within 24 hours of the visit itself – reaffirm your interest and express your appreciation to the people who acted as your hosts during the visit.

Additional Background Checks:

The employer has studied your resume. You've been asked many probing questions during your initial interview and the office visit, and you were given a test. The employer has all of the information about you that they need, right? Not necessarily. Many employers are gathering additional background information on candidates prior to making an employment decision. Usually, information the employer obtains is directly relevant to the specific type of job. For example, a commercial bank is likely to check your own credit history before they hire you to work with their customers' funds.

Background screening of candidates is an increasingly common and legal practice. The decision to hire an individual is a major one, and employers want to ensure that there are no "surprises" which would affect your performance. It is best to be honest and upfront with employers when background information is sought.

Employers WILL check:

- References
- College transcript
- Employment history
- All information you supply on the employment application

Employers MAY also check:

- Credit history
- Conviction record
- Driving record
- Drug test
- Test scores
- Fingerprints
- FBI file

According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act of September 1997, employers must tell you if they discovered something during the background screening which caused them to reject your candidacy. You may ask for this information, and you also have the right to appeal a hiring decision based on background screening data. If you have any concerns or questions about an employer's screening practices, please consult with one of the Career Services staff members.

Wine, Dine, and Act Fine

As part of the interview process, typically the second interview, you may be invited to lunch or dinner with the employer. Generally, employers view the meal as a time to judge how the candidate interacts with others. Someone who is good at one-on-one situations might not be great in a group setting. The meal shows the candidate's potential as a team player and his/her ability to move from one setting to another.

For some this can be the most daunting meal in the post-graduate world. How will you handle yourself? While it is unlikely that using the wrong fork will ruin your chances at a job with the company, table manners do count and play an important part in making a favorable impression. Inappropriate behavior might tip the scales in the balance toward another candidate. Be sure you take your dining etiquette seriously. Fortunately, it is never too late to learn appropriate table manners.

Before the Meal

- Drink a glass of juice; this will stabilize your blood sugar and keep you from "starving".
- If you or someone you are dining with is left-handed, it is best for the left-handed person to sit at the left end of the table or at the head of the table. This arrangement helps ensure that everyone has adequate elbowroom to eat comfortably.
- Place your napkin on your lap after everyone is seated and after your host has moved his/her napkin.
- Let the host take the lead when ordering; this will give you an idea of what to eat. If the recruiter is not first in line to order ask him/her, "What do you recommend?"
- Review the menu and decide what you want to order quickly.
- Do not order alcoholic beverages.

During the Meal

- If your place is set with more than one fork, begin from the outside and work your way in.
- When sharing a sauce with others, spoon some of it on to your plate; don't dip your food into it.
- Drink from your water glass, located to your right.
- Taste your food before seasoning it.
- Keep your elbows off the table.

- Don't lick your utensils or fingers.
- When cutting meat, the fork prongs should be pointed down, not up.
- Cut your meat or meal one piece at a time; avoid dicing it into bite-sized pieces all at once.
- Never chew with your mouth open or make loud noises when you eat. Although it is possible to talk with a small piece of food in your mouth, do not talk with your mouth full.
- With dinner rolls, break off and butter one small piece of bread at a time; avoid making a sandwich.
- Always pass items to the right.
- Say "please" and "thank you", people do notice.
- Put your silverware on your plate in the "rest position" when you speak, not on the table. Rest position means your knife and fork are at the 5 and 7 o'clock position respectively.

After the Meal

- When you are finished eating, place the knife and fork prongs down side by side on the plate with the handles at 4 o'clock; the server will understand this is the "I am finished" position. Place your napkin to the left of your plate.
- If your host insists the server bring the dessert menu, he/she wants you to have one.
- It is inappropriate to ask for a doggy bag when you are a guest. Save the doggy bag for informal dining situations.
- Don't ask for anyone's leftovers, ie. "Are you going to finish your chips?"
- Don't smoke while dining out.
- The host who invited you must take care of the check and the tip, don't argue.

COMMON QUESTIONS

How do I decide what to order?

First, order foods that can be eaten with a knife and a fork, no finger foods. Avoid sloppy or hard to eat foods such as, linguini, spaghetti or any other pasta with sauces that splash. Also, don't order the most expensive item on the menu or more than two courses unless the recruiter suggests it. For example, "The prime rib is the specialty here, I think you'd enjoy it." or "I'm going to try the cheesecake, why don't you have dessert too?"

What is the proper way to eat soup?

Do not slurp soup from a spoon. Spoon the soup away from you when you take it out of the bowl and sip it from the side of the spoon. If the soup is too hot to eat, let it sit until it cools; do not blow on it.

What if I have a piece of gristle in my mouth?

Never spit a piece of tough gristle or bad food into your napkin. Remove the food from your mouth using the same utensil it went in with. Place the piece of food on the edge of your plate. If possible, cover it with some other food from your plate.

What do I do if I drop a piece of silverware?

If you can reach it, pick it up and let the server know you need a clean one. If you can't, tell the server you dropped a piece of your silverware and ask for a clean one.

What if I need to leave the table during the meal?

Avoid leaving the table during the meal except in an emergency. If you must use the restroom or if you suddenly become sick, simply excuse yourself and place your napkin on your seat. Later you can apologize to the host by saying that you didn't feel well.

What if I need the salt and pepper on the other side of the table?

If you need something that you cannot reach easily, politely ask the person closest to the item to pass it to you. For example: "After you have used them yourself, would you please pass me the salt and pepper?"

Some of my dinner has fallen off my plate onto the table, should I pick it up?

If food spills off your plate, you may pick it up with a piece of your silverware and place it on the edge of your plate.

I have a piece of food in my teeth, what's the proper way to handle the situation?

If you can't remove it with your tongue, excuse yourself, leave the table and go to a mirror where you can remove it privately. Avoid using toothpicks in the presence of the recruiter.

I prefer to sit in the non-smoking section and the recruiter has requested a smoking table, what should I do?

If you are a non-smoker and the recruiter asks for a table in the smoking section, grin and bear it. However, if sitting among smokers will activate your allergies, politely request a non-smoking table.

Some Final Suggestions:

- Dress professionally.
- Shake hands with the recruiter when you arrive and before you leave.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Sit up straight at the table. It makes a good impression.
- When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap or resting on the table (with wrists on the edge of the table). Elbows on the table are acceptable only between courses, not while you are eating.
- Strive to come across as relaxed, friendly and interested in the conversation; stay upbeat and positive, but don't dominate the conversation.
- Stay away from too much personal information at the table such as religion, politics or controversial subjects.
- Think in advance about the questions you need to ask and the achievements you want to cover.
- Use this opportunity to gather more information about the career field, corporate culture, and job duties.
- Take your time eating, talking and especially listening to everyone at the table.
- Don't overindulge; this is not your last meal.
- Make sure you thank the host for providing the meal or taking you out.

Salary Negotiations

Before you accept the first (or the most recent) salary offer to come down the pike, consider these ten salary negotiation pointers and what to do and what not to do. They are designed to enable you to be successful in the phase of interviewing.

WHAT TO DO DURING SALARY NEGOTIATIONS:

1. Know the interviewing process. Salary is not usually introduced during the screening phase or the first interview; this most often occurs during the employment or decision phase of the interview. Waiting until this segment of the process allows both the employer and the job applicant to choose each other based on the goodness of fit between needs, skills, and opportunities. Delaying discussion of salary for after the screening interview and meetings with persons with hiring authority (usually not human resources personnel but departmental supervisors) is recommended.
2. Adopt a win-win strategy. When an employer seeks to bring on new hires at the lowest salary they will accept and job seekers pursue employers who will pay the highest acceptable salary, a win-lose or lose-lose situation prevails. Instead have a target salary in mind that reflects your value. Your "fair market value" can be formulated by knowing the national, industry, and company salary range for positions similar to the one you are considering.
3. Negotiate a fair salary. While most entry-level and staff positions salaries are predetermined and are attached to positions, rather than to individuals, there can be some flexibility. You can aspire toward the higher end of a position's salary range

based on your potential to out perform the average person in that position. Be prepared to negotiate based on achievements.

4. Know your salary's buying power. Before accepting a salary offer, compare the cost of living in various locations because the purchasing ability of salaries can vary from city to city. These cost-of-living differences can have a pronounced impact on your lifestyle. Access www.homefair.com for a cost-of-living comparison.
5. Keep perspective. Salary negotiation is only one part of the interview phase of the job search. As negotiations close, be sure to summarize your understanding of the offer through an acceptance letter.

WHAT NOT TO DO DURING SALARY NEGOTIATIONS:

1. Talk money too soon. Negotiating a salary before being given the job offer and determining the responsibilities you are expected to perform is whimsical. To discuss salary before this is known leaves you open to exploitation by either being overworked and/or under paid.
2. Be sidelined by "spoilers." Common negotiation spoilers are quips about how hard you've worked in college and the amount of student loans you have accumulated. Or, from employers, how a given position is a "unique" opportunity that no thinking student would pass up. An interview tug-of-war which is counterproductive can result.
3. Develop salary myopia. The result of negotiations is not a high salary, but fair compensation. If agreement on salary stalls, then try to negotiate other benefits such as starting date, percent of commission, education reimbursement, additional religious holidays or vacations.
4. Release unbridled enthusiasm. Resist the temptation to accept an offer when it is first made; regardless as to how good it sounds. Keep eagerness in check by using the 24-48 hours customarily given at the time of an offer to reassess the positions pros and cons.
5. Minimize the confidence factor. Being overconfident or feeling incompetent are not infrequent reactions to the prospect of salary negotiations. Individuals who are socially outgoing are not necessarily successful at this phase of interviewing. It is one aspect of interviewing which can be mastered if it is approached as a skill to be learned.

And finally, know that salary negotiation is only one part of the interviewing process. And it can be the capstone of a well-executed job search campaign.

Resources Available in the Career Resource Library (126 Slep)

Business Etiquette

- Business Etiquette; Dunckel, Jacqueline, 1992
- Multicultural Manners; Dresser, Norine, 1996
- The Everything Etiquette Book by Nat Segaloff; 1998

Interviewing

- Dynamite Questions to Ask at your Job Interview; Fein, Richard, 1996
- 50 Winning Answers to Interview Questions; Albrecht, Charles Jr., 1995
- Interview for Success; Krannich, C.R. and Krannich, R.L., 1990
- The Quick Interview & Salary Negotiation Book; Farr, J. Michael, 1995
- What Color is your Parachute?; Bolles, R.N., 2004
- Why should I Hire You?; Farr, J. Michael and Christophersen, Susan, 1999
- You're Hired! Secrets to Successful Job Interviews; McDonnell, Sharon, 1998
- The Smart Woman's Guide to Interviewing and Salary Negotiation; King, Julie Adair, 1995
- Your First Interview; Fry, Ron, 1993
- ACE the IT Job Interview; Moreira, Paula, 2002

Professional Dress

- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Successful Dressing by Karyn Repinski; 1999
- Dressing Smart for Men; Nicholson, 2003
- Dressing Smart for Women; Nicholson, 2003

Salary Negotiation

- Interviewing and Salary Negotiation by Kate Wendleton; 1999
- Job Offer - A How-To Negotiation Guide by Maryanne L. Wegerbauer; 2000
- Negotiating Your Salary: How to Make \$1000 a Minute; 1996

Graduate School Information

Attending graduate school, either immediately after graduation or after a few years of work experience, is an option that many people consider as part of their career development. Some people enter a career where a graduate degree is necessary for entry, others wish to study a particular academic discipline purely for the love of it. Both can be satisfying and valuable experiences if careful consideration is given to choice of program and institution and if application procedures are followed.

The following list of FAQ's provides information on topics and issues you must consider when applying to graduate and professional schools.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I work first or go directly to graduate school?

An argument can be made for going directly after graduation as well as for going after you have gained a few years of experience. If you are considering a profession such as law, medicine, and college or university teaching where education beyond the baccalaureate level is required, going immediately after graduation would probably be your choice. Many new college graduates, though, are unsure of their career interests and goals and view the graduate experience as a way to "find" themselves. This view can present a problem at the graduate level as many programs and professors expect you to have clearly defined interests and an area of specialization.

In many ways, work experience related to your interests prior to entering graduate school can lead to a more effective graduate program. Work experience can help clarify ambiguous career goals and focus you on an area of specialization. Also, the perspective, learning, and maturity acquired from practical experience can be applied to the theoretical concepts promoted in your studies and should increase your understanding of them.

Your decision depends on your situation and field of study. Consider the following factors:

- Some graduate programs, including many MBA programs, strongly encourage people to get work experience first. See if this is the case for your field of interest.
- How do you feel about more tests, papers, reading, etc.? Does the thought of more studying leave you cold? If so, you may need a break, even for only six months or a year.
- How does a graduate education fit into your personal and professional interests and growth? Try not to use graduate school as a way to postpone making difficult decisions. You might feel even more pressure and confusion later on.
- If your undergraduate grades are marginal, you may need to work while taking courses part-time to demonstrate to a graduate department (and perhaps also yourself) that you are capable of succeeding.

How can I decide which field is best for me to study?

You need to think about what you want to study, the skills you would like to enhance through your graduate work, and how they relate to your interests, values, abilities, and possible career direction.

Get information about the field you are considering. One of the biggest mistakes people make is to jump into a program based on inadequate information, perhaps because it has been highly recommended. If you feel unsure about your direction, you can come to the Career Services Office for career counseling.

Where can I get information about schools and programs?

First, you need to decide what you want and/or what is necessary for your field. In your junior year, you should begin to explore schools offering the type of program you want.

The single most effective method is talking to professors and graduate students. Since many of them have studied or worked with professors at other schools, they know about the reputations and research orientations of departments across the country.

Guides to graduate study are located in the Eiche Library. Some books describe graduate admissions and education in specific disciplines such as medicine, law, business, and psychology, while others are directories for a wide variety of graduate programs and institutions of higher education. These guides identify and briefly outline academic programs, financial aid resources, costs of study, application requirements, and other helpful information.

Some graduate program offices, such as pre-law and pre-medicine, have small information centers with pamphlets, books, graduate school bulletins and other resources.

You will also find many resources on the Internet. A good place to look is The Catapult at <http://www.jobweb.org/catapult/gguides.htm> and <http://www.petersons.com>.

Bulletins and pamphlets from graduate departments describing specific programs often include course titles and descriptions, names and degrees of faculty, areas of specialization and/or research, and admissions criteria. You can send a postcard to a university or specific department requesting your own copy. Visit some schools if at all possible. This will give you a much better "feel" for the programs you visit. Make arrangements in advance to meet with faculty, the individual who coordinates the applicant review, and some graduate students. If you cannot visit, call someone there. Request specific information about the research being conducted, course content, and admissions criteria.

To evaluate programs you should look at several characteristics. You should consider:

- Quality of the faculty (including research interests and how they match your own interests)
- Courses and concentrations related to your interests
- Prestige of the institution facilities
- Overall costs and financial aid opportunities
- Geographic location
- Opportunities available for experiential learning
- Placement opportunities
- Accreditation in your field, if applicable

Many different organizations and publications offer ratings of graduate schools and programs, but they vary on the criteria used, so read each rating and its introduction carefully to learn how judgments were made. Much of the decision is based on factors of personal importance over the ratings a school receives.

What are the admissions criteria?

The specific criteria and their relative weights vary, depending on the academic discipline, particular education institution, and number of applicants. The most important criteria generally include:

- Undergraduate grade point average
- Success in relevant courses
- Admission test scores
- Strong, descriptive letters of recommendation
- Evidence of genuine interest on application and/or a cover letter
- Relevant work experience and/or undergraduate research experience
- Interview (when required)
- Well-written admissions essays

Faculty, books, and articles can provide specific information about grade point average and admission test score criteria. Certain programs have very high grade point average or test cutoff points, while for others, work experience and evidence of success in relevant courses are much more important. Do not assume that you can never get into a discipline.

Remember that course requirements differ from one graduate program to another.

You generally do not need to have an undergraduate degree in the same or a closely allied field. Law and medical school, for example, prefer that the applicant's major be in an area of the student's interest. Check to see what courses are required, however. The course work can be taken subsequent to graduation, if necessary. At some universities you can complete these courses as a non-degree graduate student seeking to become qualified for a program.

If the programs you first investigate have admissions criteria that you cannot meet, look for related programs in other fields with less stringent criteria. You may discover a challenging, relevant program or field that you have not considered.

Do not underestimate the importance of relevant work, independent study, or research experience if you have borderline grades or test scores. You can also increase your chance of being admitted if on your application you demonstrate a genuine interest in the field.

If you have graduated and been successful in your career, you may be pleasantly surprised to discover that your post-graduate achievements have more weight than your undergraduate grade point average.

In addition to the complete application form, items required by you for application might include graduate admission test scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, an essay or statement of intent.

Graduate Admissions Tests

The tests required vary by type of graduate study. Typical admissions tests include:

- GRE (Graduate Record Exam) (Oct., Dec., Feb., April, June)
- GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) (Oct., Jan., March, June)
- LSAT (Law School Admission Test) (Sept., Dec., Feb., June)
- MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) (April, Sept.)
- DAT (Dental Admission Test) (April, Oct.)
- OAT (Optometry Admission Test) (March, Oct.)
- VAT (Veterinary Aptitude Test) (May, Oct.)

The graduate schools' catalogs will specify which test you need and will often indicate average scores needed to be competitive for acceptance. You should plan to take the appropriate test approximately one year before your anticipated matriculation date.

You may need to brush up on your test taking knowledge and skills. Studying for any of these exams is best done by following the suggestions in the registration booklet. There are many books and services available for practice and strategy development. Before you buy a book or enroll in an often costly review course, decide if you learn better by reading and practicing independently (books) or by instruction and group practice (review course). If you can, evaluate the content and style of the books or programs you are considering to see if you can understand them and can learn from them.

Transcripts

Official transcripts of your undergraduate work and any other graduate work you have completed must be sent to the graduate schools. This may be done at the end of your junior year or in the middle of your senior year or, for those going on later, at any point after you have graduated. Contact the Registrars Office to have your transcripts sent; anticipate a fee for this service.

Letters of Recommendation

Ideally, you should begin to think about this a year before applying to graduate school in order to ensure that professors and other relevant professionals have gotten to know you well enough to write good references. Most graduate programs require that two or three

recommendation letters be sent. Some programs enclose evaluation forms to be filled out by each reference.

Schools prefer and sometimes require that at least one and sometimes two references be on the faculty or staff of a university or college, preferably in the same department where you are currently studying and/or in the same field in which you are applying to do your graduate study. If you have worked in a job related to the field, a supervisor may provide an excellent reference.

When choosing reference people, an important consideration is how well and in what depth the individual will describe you in the letter. If a doctoral teaching assistant knows you better than a full professor, for example, she/he may write a better, stronger reference.

When approaching people for reference letters, ask each person if she/he knows you well enough to write a meaningful letter. Also, provide as much "lead time" as possible, a month or more if possible. If the individual appears reluctant, politely say you can find someone else.

To help the person write a relevant, favorable letter, it is best to provide a copy of your resume, your goals for graduate school, the schools to which you are applying, and any forms the person has been requested to complete. Also include a stamped, addressed envelope unless the school has specified a different procedure.

Don't be afraid to check with each reference one or more times prior to the deadline to see if the letter has been sent. Many people with good intentions get busy and forget the deadline.

Application Essay

Most schools will require that you write an essay or statement on your background and interests as they relate to your field of study. These are often used as an opportunity to see you beyond the "numbers" in the admissions criteria. Many schools will also ask you to provide short answer essays to specific questions within your field to assess your knowledge and understanding of the field you are entering. These essays are one measure of your ability to write, to build arguments, and to think critically. They also assess your enthusiasm for the field of study, creativity, maturity, and uniqueness.

Applications differ in the extent to which the writer is requested to write essays or short answers. MBA applications are noted for including one or more long essay questions about the applicant's purpose and direction. Some applications for science programs do not even have short-answer questions about the candidate. In this case, a cover letter addressing the three points listed above will help you "stand out from the crowd".

Have someone review your essay for content, grammar, and spelling. Often the best people to critique your essay are your advisor or your recommendation letter writers, as they will be able to tell you what to stress and what to minimize or delete. You can also bring your essay(s) to the Career Services Office. Take your time developing your essay(s); they are often the most crucial part of your application.

How many schools should I apply to?

A common recommendation when selecting graduate programs is to apply to five schools, reflecting the following categories:

- One program that is extremely desirable to you, with competitive admission standards;
- Three programs that are realistic for you in terms of admission standards and also meet your criteria;
- One program you are confident about getting into which meets your criteria.
- Some students choose to apply to 10 or more graduate programs. This can become costly in terms of time filling out the forms and money (most application fees are

\$35 and up). Some professors are reluctant to complete more than 5-7 recommendation forms, especially since they tend to be slightly different for each school.

If you are having difficulty narrowing your list of graduate schools, take the following steps:

- Think carefully about exactly what aspects of the field you want to concentrate on, the types of research you are interested in, etc.
- Have you gotten specific information about the faculty, facilities, and programs of interest to you? Compare that information carefully with your academic and/or career interests.
- Consider criteria about the institution and community, such as size, facility location, cultural factors, cost of living, and weather conditions.

When should I start sending out applications?

Many graduate programs have February or early March deadlines, while for some it is best to apply in November or December of your senior year for admission the following fall. Generally, the more competitive the program, the earlier you need to submit all the application materials.

Professors in a given discipline usually know the general guidelines regarding the best time to apply. It is also essential to carefully read the application from each school. It is best to start filling out applications and soliciting recommendations two to three months prior to the deadline. It can be hard to anticipate what types of problems will delay the process. For example, letters of recommendation are often delayed when professors are busy. Most schools that fail to receive all your application materials (application, test scores, transcript, letters of recommendation) by the deadline date will not consider your application.

How can I best fill out the application?

The application should be completed neatly, accurately, and completely. It must be easy to read, free from any errors, and include all the information requested. You need to convey three important points in your application:

- Your sincere interest in that particular program
- Your future goals and direction, and the relevance of the program
- Your major strengths, skills, and achievements

Each of these three points need to be elaborated concisely and in a clear, organized writing style, with specific details and examples as space permits.

What financial aid is available?

Three kinds of financial aid are available: (1) work programs, such as graduate assistantships and college work study programs; (2) monetary awards, including grants, fellowships and scholarships; and (3) loans, usually administered through banks, the government, or the educational institution. *Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Professional Programs: An Overview*, provides a detailed description of each type of financial aid.

Because every graduate school has its own application process and system of awarding aid, you must obtain that information directly from each of the institutions to which you are applying. You can check with both the Financial Aid Office and the graduate academic department.

Loans and college work study programs are awarded on the basis of financial need. To determine need, many graduate schools require that the applicant submit either the GAPSFA (Graduate and Professional School Financial Aid Service) form, or the FAF, (Financial Aid Form), both of which are administered by the College Scholarship Service of the College Board. You will be considered a dependent of your parents if you have been claimed on their last federal income tax form, have lived with them for a specific period of time or received more than a specified amount of money from them. To obtain the most up-to-date information on these restrictions, talk with a graduate financial aid officer.

Graduate assistantships pay tuition and a stipend for living expenses. Most are administered by academic departments and involve either 10 or 20 hours of work per week. Teaching assistantships involve assisting a professor with grading, office hours, and recitation sections or being responsible for the entire teaching of one or more courses. Research assistantships involve assisting ongoing research and can evolve into conducting your own research project for a thesis. Administrative assistantships are much less common and can involve managing a small facility such as a computer lab.

Application Action Plan

Junior Year, Fall and Spring

- Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- Talk to advisors about application requirements.
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests.
- Investigate national scholarships.
- If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation.

Junior Year, Summer

- Take required graduate admissions tests.
- Write for application materials.
- Visit institutions of interest, if possible.
- Write your application essay.
- Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.

Senior Year, Fall

- Obtain letters of recommendation.
- Take graduate admission tests if you haven't already.
- Send in completed applications.
- Register for Graduate and Professional School Financial Aid Service (GAPSFAS), if required.

Senior Year, Spring

- Check with all institutions before the deadline to make sure your file is complete.
- Visit institutions that accept you. Send a deposit to your institution of choice.
- Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you of your decision so that they may admit students on their waiting list.
- Send Thank You notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.

Resources available in the Career Resource Library (126 Slep)

Finding Your Way with an MBA – 2000
Game Plan for Getting into Business School – 2000
Game Plan for Getting into Law School – 2000
Game Plan for Getting into Medical School – 2000
Graduate Admissions Essays – 2000
Graduate Programs in Arts and Architecture – 2001
Graduate Programs in Biology – 2001
Graduate Programs in Humanities – 2002
Graduate Programs in Physical Sciences – 2001
Graduate Programs in Social Sciences – 2001
The Ultimate Grad School Survival Guide - 1996
How to Write a Winning Personal Statement – 1997
MBA Programs – 2001

Job Search Strategies

Competing effectively in today's job market requires self-knowledge, persistence, ingenuity, and substantial amounts of hard work. It has been said that looking for a job can be a full-time job in itself.

In a job search you will need to market yourself to employers. As a candidate you must:

- know your skills and what you have to offer an employer,
- identify and target employers that would hire people with your skills and education,
- develop effective job search tools,
- contact employers for job opportunities, and
- interview for the job.

People who are successful in obtaining jobs they enjoy are not necessarily those possessing high grade point averages and/or substantial work experience. Knowing how to effectively pursue a job can be as important as the specific qualifications required for the position.

Know Yourself and Your Objective

The most important step in the job search is identifying what kind of job you want and what you have to offer an employer. Employers are most interested in individuals who have focused their career interests. It is not an employer's responsibility nor inclination to figure out your attributes. To know what job you want, you should:

- Identify your interests, skills, experiences, knowledge, and attributes. These are of primary interest to an employer. Being able to effectively communicate these to an employer is the key to landing a job.
- Consider the size, the location, and culture of the work environment you would prefer. This can include the various work sectors. There may be possibilities for someone with your interests in each of these settings:

Business/Industry:

Employers can include merchandising, manufacturing, public utilities, transportation, banking and financial services, and consulting.

Government:

FEDERAL – Agencies such as the National Security Agency, the FBI, Department of Defense, or the Department of Labor.

STATE – Job classifications and departments vary from state to state. Some examples are: game commissions, employment services, probation and parole offices, and licensing and regulatory agencies.

COUNTY/MUNICIPAL – Agencies such as children's services, area agencies on aging, tax offices, planning and zoning, police, and the fire department.

Education:

Public and private schools, community colleges, parks and recreation centers, trade or technical schools, colleges and universities, and nature centers.

Not-for-Profit:

Social services including the American Heart Association, a women's resource center, housing agencies, mental health services, etc. Most hospitals and medical services are not-for-profit. Cultural foundations and centers, such as zoos, museums, and community theaters may be not-for-profit.

To help you focus your ideas, write two or more goal statements using the following format:

"I want to do (tasks and responsibilities) using (skills, knowledge, experiences) in (setting)."

Learn As Much As You Can About the Work

After narrowing down some possible goal statements, the next step is to find out what the job you want involves. You can learn about the tasks and responsibilities involved in the job, the salary you might expect, and the training required. You can also learn where and how people obtain entry level positions, what skills and information are important on a resume, and how various work settings differ. All of this information can help you decide if you want that kind of work.

You can research careers through reading job descriptions and by interviewing people. The Career Services Office has books and pamphlets that describe careers. Professional journals include articles which describe aspects of work. Conduct an informational interview with someone doing the type of work in which you are interested to learn what it involves.

Another way to learn more about a career field is to join professional associations and attend local or regional meetings. Most of the members work in the field, so this can be an effective way to make contacts, get the names of relevant journals, learn about what the work involves, and hear about employment opportunities.

The benefits of knowing about the job include being able to write a more effective resume geared toward the field and performing better in the interview because you know more about what will be required of you on the job.

Prepare Your Job Search Tools

As in marketing a product, effectively advertising your skills and experience will catch the attention of employers.

Communicating effectively is vital in making your case. That communication may take the form of resumes, cover letters, information interviews, networking, or telephone calls. You must express why you are interested in that employer and position and why you feel qualified. This is where your research will be helpful.

A strong resume or cover letter can be written only after you have assessed your skills and experience and learned about the requirements of the job. It is with this knowledge that you can tailor your resume and cover letter to the type of position you are seeking.

If you are looking for several types of positions, you will be more competitive if you have several versions of your resume, relevant to each position.

Develop a List of Possible Employers

Who would be in the market to hire someone with your interests, skills and experience? That is the question you must answer in your job search. You can identify possible employers through many means:

BOOKS

Employer directories

Some examples might be:

- CPC Job Choices
- Dun's Career Guide
- The National JobBank
- Standard & Poor's Corporation Directory

TELEPHONE BOOKS

- Professional journals, newsletters, trade magazines
- Chamber of Commerce membership directory
- Professional association membership directories

PEOPLE

- Penn State Alumni (try local clubs or alumni lists)
- Professors, instructors, friends, neighbors, family
- Members of professional associations
- Career day contacts
- Special interest groups, such as women's centers, Rotary Club, or community centers.

NEWS MEDIA

- News items indicating growth and expansion of organizations, establishment of new companies
- Look in newspapers, television, news magazines, and radio

WORLD WIDE WEB

- Can search for and research employers by field, type, size, or other characteristics

Research and Identify Potential Employers

Through effective research you can narrow down your prospects so you can more effectively target employers. As you identify potential employers, you will want to conduct some research on the organization. Knowing facts about the organization before you interview will help you answer questions about why you want to work for them and what you have to offer them if you are hired.

Find out:

- What they do: goods manufactured, services provided, programs offered
- What positions are typically available
- Why this organization needs someone like you
- What is the future growth and development of the organization

Researching employers can help you decide if a certain organization is right for you. In addition, you can make a more effective presentation of your background and skills by knowing how they would benefit the employer. Researching an employer demonstrates commitment and a willingness to make the extra effort to prepare. Thorough identification of and research into potential employers, though time consuming, can make your job search efforts more effective.

Job Search Strategies

WANT ADS:

Scan want ads. Mail resume with cover letter tailored to specific job qualifications.

Tools

- Newspapers
- Journals
- Newsletters
- Trade Magazines
- World Wide Web
- Cover letters
- Resumes

Pros - Involves minimal investment of time in identifying companies. Resume and cover letter are sent for actual job openings.

Cons - Resume and cover letter will compete with large number of others. Ads follow job market; least effective in times of economic downturn.

Helpful Hints -

- Use as a meter on the job market in a certain geographic area.
- Try to get your materials in as early as possible.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES:

Respond to employment agency ads in newspapers; check phone book for names of agencies to contact.

Tools

- Resumes
- Business Attire

Pros - Fee-paid jobs for graduates in technical fields or those with marketable experience.

Cons - Usually of less help to non-technical/inexperienced graduates. Likely to charge fees.

Helpful Hints

- Identify agencies that specialize in your field.
- Make frequent contact with your counselor to obtain better service.

TEMPORARY AGENCIES:

Complete an application at the agency and then go for an interview and testing.

Tools

- Resume
- Business Attire

Pros

- Networking with professionals.
- Provide training to employees.
- Arrange temporary work which could result in permanent placement.

Helpful Hints - Temporary agencies continue to grow and are utilized heavily by companies.

TARGETED MAILING:

Develop a good cover letter tailored to a specific type of job and the needs of the company. Send letter with resume to selected companies.

Tools

- List of well researched companies
- Tailored cover letters
- Resumes

Pros - Investment of time and effort should merit strong response from employers.

Cons - Requires a significant investment of time in researching companies and writing cover letters as well as following up with contacts.

Helpful Hints - · Try to find out who is in charge of the area in which you want to work; send your materials to that person. Great method when used in conjunction with networking.

IN-PERSON VISIT

Visit many companies. Ask to see person in specific department. Submit resume and application.

Tools

- Business attire
- Company address list
- Resumes

Pros - Resume and application are on file with the company.

Cons - Requires a great deal of time to make a relatively small number of contacts.

Helpful Hints - Research the companies prior to your visit; ask for a specific person or ask about a specific type of job.

NETWORKING

Talk to everyone you know to develop a list of possible contacts; ask for information on jobs/companies and circulate your resume.

Tools

- List of contacts
- Resumes
- Business attire

Pros - May learn of unadvertised openings. May result in a courtesy interview. Often results in a closer match of your interests to a job.

Cons - A contact in itself is not enough to get you a job. You may exhaust all leads without landing a job. Quite time consuming.

Helpful Hints

- Follow through on all leads.
- Keep broadening your network of contacts

ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING PENN STATE ALTOONA

Sign up for company interviews in 126 Slep.

Tools

- Employer literature
- Resumes
- Business attire

Pros - One of the primary ways in which companies recruit for new college graduates.

Cons - Declining as a method employers use to identify candidates.

Helpful Hints

- Check postings each week for interviewing opportunities.
- Use postings as a way to identify possible employers

RESUME REFERRAL

Register with one of the many national referral services. As jobs are listed by employers, the data bank of registrants is searched for matches. If your materials match, they are sent to the employers.

Tools - Registration form supplied by service

Pros - Another way to monitor the job market and get your qualifications to the attention of employers.

Cons - May involve a fee. Often more helpful to those in technical or specialized fields. May not learn of any activity of your materials

Helpful Hints - Use only in conjunction with other job search strategies.

WORLD WIDE WEB

On the www you can research employers, access job vacancy listings, and post your resume. Use this resource for many aspects of your job search.

Tools - Access to the Web

Pros

- Actual job openings.
- Many employers use a wide variety of job listing services.
- Many listings have free to low cost access.

Cons - Competition is growing as use of the Web increases. Many jobs listed are technical in nature, though the visibility of "non-technical" fields is growing.

Helpful Hints - Use the Web frequently as information and sites change quickly.

UNIVERSITY PARK RECRUITMENT

Use the website to see if employers that you are interested in are visiting University Park. Call to request an interview. (Detailed information is available in 126 Slep regarding this process)

Tools

- Employer literature
- Resumes
- Business attire

Pros - One of the primary ways in which companies recruit for technical and business positions.

Cons - Declining as a method employers use to identify candidates. May be less effective for non-technical/non-business candidates

Helpful Hints

- Check postings each week for interviewing opportunities.
- Use postings as a way to identify possible employers.

Keep Broadening Your Network of Contacts

One of the most effective ways to obtain a job is to learn about it from another person. An individual may know what a specific position involves and think you would perform well, or she/he may have heard about a possibility and share the lead with you.

For this reason, it is important to develop as broad and extensive a "network of contacts" as possible. This can be done two ways. You can tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job and provide a brief description of your interests and background. You can also make it a point to get to know people in jobs related to your interests, by visiting the workplace at a time they may be free, by calling and making appointments, or by attending professional association meetings.

If you are having difficulty finding a full-time position in your field of choice or a position at the level of responsibility or salary you'd prefer, your network of contacts may provide valuable information about the part-time positions in your field and/or full-time, less desirable positions that would serve as a "stepping-stone" to your career goals.

Keeping a list of possible contacts, as well as a record of people you have met, is a key way

to keep motivated and to organize the information you generate. Take some time and devise an organizational system for your job search that works well for you.

Looking for a job can be a full-time job. However, persistence, ingenuity, and hard work will help you to compete more successfully in today's job market.

COMPANY RESEARCH

One of the most important activities in a job search is finding out about the company you want to work for. Knowing facts about companies before you interview will help you answer questions about why you want to work for them and what you have to offer them if you are hired. It will also give you some information and insight into the organizational structure and future plans of the company so you can assess its potential in terms of your future growth and development.

Most information about companies is readily available at libraries through various directories and resource materials. However, if you have difficulty locating materials, do not hesitate to check with the local area Chamber of Commerce or call the company directly and request an annual report.

The Interview

With luck, hard work, and persistence, your efforts will result in an interview. Your goal in an interview is to obtain a job offer. In this situation you have the opportunity to "close the sale" – to convince the employer that, indeed, you are the best candidate for the job. See the "Interview Skills" section starting on page 19 of this manual.

After the Interview

Write a Thank You Letter

Though not mandatory, this step is an additional way to leave a good impression and reiterate your interest in the job and employer. It needs to be done almost immediately after the interview and is much more effective if your letter is personalized rather than a form letter that could be sent to many different employers.

The *Thank You Letter* will have more meaning to the employer if you explain why you are interested. You can refer directly to things you were told during the interview or information you read about the job and/or employer, why you want to work for them and what you have to offer them if you are hired. It will also give you some information and insight into the organizational structure and future plans of the company so you can assess its potential in terms of your future growth and development.

Most information about companies is readily available at libraries through various directories and resource materials. However, if you have difficulty locating materials, do not hesitate to check with the local area Chamber of Commerce or call the company directly and request an annual report.

Don't forget that the staff in the Career Services Office is available for help. This packet was designed to assist you in your job search, but you may consider making an appointment for more assistance or information. We also have information available for interviewing and writing thank you letters and other correspondence. Please do not hesitate to make an appointment. Stop in at 126 Slep or call 949-5058.

Resources Available in the Career Resource Library

100 Best Nonprofits to Work For – 2000

300 New Ways to Get a Better Job – 1991

A Foot in the Door – 2000

America's Federal Jobs – 1991

America's Top Medical and Human Services Jobs – 1994

America's Top Medical, Education & Human Services Jobs – 2001
 America's Top Office Management and Sales Jobs – 1994
 The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries – 2000-2001
 An Easier Way to Change Jobs – 1993
 The Book of U.S. Government Jobs – 2000
 The Career Atlas – How to Find a Good Job When Good Jobs are Hard to Find – 1996
 Career Power – A Blueprint for Getting the Job You Want – 1996
 Career Recruiting Opportunities Program – PA Institute of Certified Public Accountants – 1999 & 2000 (4)
 Civil Service Career Starter
 College Grad Job Hunter – 1998
 The Complete Guide to Public Employment – 1986
 The Complete Job Search Handbook – 1999
 Decisions – Entry Level Jobs for College Graduates
 Directory of Jobs & Careers Abroad – 2000
 Employment Outlook, 1996-2006 – 1998
 Executive Recruiters Almanac – 2000
 Federal Civil Service Jobs – 2000
 Federal Jobs – The Ultimate Guide – 1991 & 1997
 Federal Jobs in Law Enforcement – 1996
 The Fool Proof Job Search Workbook – 1995
 Get Hired! – 1996
 Getting the Job You Really Want (Instructor's Guide & Step-by-Step Guide) – 1995
 Good Works – Jobs That Make a Difference – 1994
 Government Job Finder – 1997-2000
 Guide to America's Federal Jobs – 2001
 Health Care Job Explosion! – 2001
 Hire Education – 1998
 Hoover's Handbook of American Business – 1992
 Hoover's Handbook of Private Companies – 1998
 How to Get a Job in Europe – 1999
 Inside Secrets of Finding a Teaching Job – 1997
 International Information Directory – 2000-2001
 International Jobs Directory – 1999
 Job Hunter's Yellow Pages – 1994
 Job Hunting for Dummies – 1999
 Job Hunting for the Utterly Confused – 1998
 The Job Hunting Handbook
 Job Search – Career Planning Guide, Book II – 1996
 Job Search Handbook for People with Disabilities – 2000
 The JobBank Guide to Computer and High-Tech Companies – 1999
 The JobBank Guide to Health Care Companies – 1998
 Jobs Almanac – 2000
 Jobs and Careers with Non-Profit Organizations – 1999
 Kennedy's Pocket Guide to Working with Executive Recruiters – 1996
 Knock 'Em Dead 1999 (The Ultimate Job Seeker's Handbook) – 1999
 Liberal Arts Jobs – 1998
 Minority Organizations – A National Directory – 1997
 The National Parks Trade Journal – 1991
 The National Resource Guide for the Placement of Artists – 1992
 Networking for Everyone – 1998
 Networking Skills That Will Get You the Job You Want – 1999
 Occupational Projections and Training Data – 1998
 Organize Your Job Search – 2000
 Pennsylvania Education Directory – 1994-1995

Peterson's Hidden Job Market – 2000
Peterson's Job Opportunities – Health and Science – 1999
Peterson's Media Companies – 2000
Power Networking – 1998
Professionals Job Finder – 1997
Signing On – Attention Sales Professionals – 1992
Six Steps to Employment for People with Disabilities – 2000
So, You Want to Join the Peace Corps...What to Know Before You Go – 2000
Teaching English Abroad – 1999
The Temp Track – 1994
The Unofficial Guide to Getting a Job at Microsoft – 2000
The Women's Job Search Handbook – 1991
The Work Book – Getting the Job You Want
Transition to the Workplace – 1998
U.S. Industrial Outlook '94
Work Your Way Around the World – 1991 & 1999
Your Hired! – Secrets to a Successful Job Search – 1999

Sample Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview

These are sample questions – don't feel you need to ask all of them. Please remember not to ask the volunteers about their salaries.

About Contact

- What is your background?
- Describe your career path. How have you progressed to your present position?
- Describe a typical workday and workweek.
- What are the most rewarding aspects of your job? Least rewarding?
- Are you confronted with difficult decisions or situations in your position?
- What are your specific responsibilities?
- How did you get started in this field?
- What college courses have been most helpful to your career?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions connected with your occupation?
- How does your career affect your lifestyle?

About the industry

- What types of degrees, skills, and experiences are necessary for this field?
- Describe the changes taking place in your field. Projected future trends? Turnover rate?
- Has the field changed since you first started your career?
- What is the major challenge you face?
- Do you have flexibility in terms of your work hours? Vacation time? Geographic location?
- How many hours per week are expected or warranted for peak performance?
- Are many evenings or weekends used for job-related responsibilities?
- How much travel is involved with a job in your field?
- What social obligations go along with a job in your field? Are there events you are expected to attend outside of work hours or organizations you are expected to join? Are you compensated for the extra time?
- What are the criteria for success in your field?
- How does one hear about new openings in your field? Are they usually advertised?
- How is the job market for your field in this area of the country? Is it difficult to find an opening? Is there an area that's best for starting such a career?
- Are other companies in this field growing? Why?

About the organization

- How is this organization structured?
- What is the organization's philosophy?
- How does your position interact with other departments?
- Where would someone in your field go within this organization?
- What kind of training would a new employee in this field receive?
- How do you provide performance feedback for employees?
- How are decisions made in this organization?

Relating to your skills and experience

- What factors do you consider to be most important when hiring a new employee?
- Do you have any advice for someone like myself who is planning to start a career in this field? Can you suggest other types of training or experience that may be helpful in building a career in this field?
- How do you see my skill/experience fitting into this field?
- Do you know of any friends or colleagues in this profession who might also be willing to talk with me and share their ideas? May I use your name when contacting these individuals?
- Can you offer any suggestions regarding my resume?
- Do you have any advice to offer me about my interviewing skills?

How to Work a Job Fair

Advice & Tips

Note: Students attending job fairs should plan to view the videotape : How to Make a Job Fair Work for You." To view this tape, stop by the Career Services Office in 126 Slep. It will take approximately 15 minutes. In addition to the excellent information on the videotape, Career Services offers these tips for success at job fairs.

A job fair is a great way to meet prospective employers and find out where you may want to start your professional career. At a job fair, each employer will have a booth or table with literature on the organization. You will have a chance to meet recruiters, ask questions about their organizations, and tell them about your qualifications.

Here's how to make the most of the time you'll spend at the job fair:

1. **PREPARE YOURSELF**

Before you speak to anyone, it is important that you have given some thought as to what you want in a position. Giving thought to the questions below can help you more clearly express your interest.

- What are your skills and abilities?
- What are your career goals?
- In light of the above, what type of experience are you seeking?

If possible, review listings of companies attending ahead of time. Determine which companies have the potential of meeting your needs and then research those organizations. Research resources could include: the Career Services Office, internet, library, professors, and alumni contacts. If you are unable to locate information, use some of the beginning time of the job fair to get literature from those in attendance, look over the literature and prepare to approach a representative.

2. **DRESS**

Although job fairs are often promoted as "informal" events, there is little question that this occasion will be the first impression that you will make with an employer. Dress professionally, as if you were interviewing for a job. Avoid casual clothing, be neat, clean, well groomed, and avoid excessive jewelry and perfume.

3. **WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU**

Several copies of your resume are a must! A suggestion: for job fairs it is generally easier to delete the career objective (unless you are targeting a single industry/occupation area) as representatives will frequently use your resume to make notes and comments about your qualifications. Other items, which support your interests and abilities such as references, written work or a portfolio can also be helpful.

4. **COMMUNICATION: WHAT TO SAY AND DO**

- Shake hands and introduce yourself – "Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a (Class year) (Major).
- Hand the representative your resume.
- Take 1-3 minutes to describe yourself and demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and your "match" with the organization's needs. Use your company research to articulate what your strengths are in relationship to what you have read. Draw attention to those areas of your resume that you feel support your interests and qualifications. Express your interest in the organization.
- Prepare sample question answers.
- Demonstrate confidence and maintain good eye contact.

5. **GATHER INFORMATION**

- Ask questions that you have already identified or which are sparked by conversations with company representatives. These may include questions about organization mission, entry level positions, qualification requirements, training programs, growth opportunities or concerns/interests you have about the company.
- Do not ask about compensation at this stage of the employment process. Some employers may choose to introduce the topic, but it is generally not wise for a candidate to do so.
- Ask how you proceed to pursue opportunities, how to apply for positions, who is the contact person, and what is the hiring timeline.
- Gather literature and ask for a business card. Retain information for professional files.
- Shake hands and thank the representative for her/his time.
- Don't Expect a Job Offer on the Spot. This is only the first step.

6. **FOLLOW-UP**

Send thank you/follow-up letters in a timely fashion (24 - 48 hours).

Government Employment

Many graduates are interested in working for the government, but have little awareness of the opportunities available to them or the procedures for locating positions in this work sector. When job seekers speak of "working for the government," they are actually speaking of the federal government executive agencies only. But there are judicial agencies, staffs of legislators, private organizations that offer services to government agencies, and more. Moreover these opportunities are not limited to the federal government.

This page provides insight into some of these options as well as information and tips on the job search process. This sector is constantly changing and growing. The job seeker should understand the complex systems involved in the job search process.

Generally, most entry-level positions with the Federal Government requiring college degrees are filled in one of the following ways:

1. **Federal Job Opportunities List (FJOL)**

This list provides information on positions for which applications are currently being accepted. The FJOL is published on a weekly basis for local areas (e.g., the Philadelphia region); a nationwide list is also published which contains federal job opportunities located anywhere in the nation or world. Both lists are available for review at any Federal Employment Information Center as well as local Job Service Offices.

Federal Employment Information Centers

- *Philadelphia* - Open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. You may request forms by writing to the Center located in Room 1416, Federal Building, 600 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.
- *Pittsburgh* - Open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. You may drop off requests or write in for forms to the Center located in Room 119, Federal Building, 1000 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.
- *Harrisburg* - Open everyday except Wednesday 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. You may request forms by writing to the Center located in Room 168, Federal Building, 228 Walnut Street, P.O. Box 761, Harrisburg, PA 17108.
- *Baltimore* - Open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Self-service only. You may request forms by writing to the Center located in Room 1416, Federal Building, 600 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.
- When you see positions in which you are interested and qualified, apply following the instructions with each position.

2. **Quality Graduate Program**

This program applies to entry-level (GS-5/GS-7) positions filled under the Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) program. ACWA covers a wide range of administrative and professional occupations, many of which do not have specific educational requirements; thus the ACWA program is especially suitable for graduates in Liberal Arts and General Business Administration (except accountants). Approximately 100 different types of occupations are filled through ACWA and are covered under the following groups:

- Group I - Health, Safety and Environmental
- Group II - Writing and Public Information
- Group III - Business, Finance and Management
- Group IV - Personnel, Administration and Computer
- Group V - Benefits Review, Tax and Legal
- Group VI - Law Enforcement and Investigation

College seniors who are eligible for the Quality Graduate Program meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a 3.45 cumulative GPA, or
- Rank in the upper 10% of the graduating class or major college subdivision (Business Administration, Liberal Arts, Health and Human Development, Office of Personnel Management, etc.).

If you meet these academic standards, simply submit a cover letter, resume, and proof (transcript) that you meet the Quality Graduate criteria to any position/agency in which you are interested.

NOTE: Positions in the sciences and engineering are not covered by this program.

For those students interested in administrative positions covered under ACWA, but who do not meet the GPA requirement, the Federal Government is currently reviewing each of the positions to determine ways of examining for them. The two ways under consideration are (a) review of education and experience via resume, and (b) testing. As of this writing, decisions have not been finalized. Our recommendation to these students would be to follow the process defined in #1 (Federal Job Opportunities List).

3. **Applying for Positions Unique to Specific Federal Agencies**

Certain federal agencies handle their own recruitment and hiring process for positions unique to their agency. If you want more information about career fields that are filled from examinations handled by specific federal agencies, you will need to write to the agency directly. Examples of career fields and agencies covered under this category include:

- Bank Examiner, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
- Correctional Officer, Federal Prison System
- Aerospace Technologist, NASA Headquarters
- Dietitian, Veterans Administration
- Psychologist, Department of Justice

4. **Application to Independent Federal Agencies**

Certain agencies are not required to use the regular Civil Service system and thus fill their positions through their own hiring systems. If you are interested in a job with one of these agencies, you should contact the organization directly:

- Central Intelligence Agency
- National Security Agency
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- Federal Reserve System, Board of Governors
- U.S. Department of State
- General Accounting Office

Application Materials

If you already have a resume, and it does not include all of the following, you may attach a separate sheet of paper with the additional information:

- The title and announcement number of the job you are applying for, Office Personnel Management (OPM) will only accept applications for jobs currently open on the Federal Job Opportunity List.
- Your full name, mailing address, and your home and work telephone numbers.
- Your Social Security number.
- For any education or training you have:

- a. Name, city and state of school.
 - b. Type of degree or certificate (if any).
 - c. Subject of degree.
 - d. Year and month of degree, certificate or diploma.
- For any employment, military or volunteer experience you have:
 - a. Organization or company you worked for, and its mailing address.
 - b. Your job title.
 - c. Month and year of the beginning and end of your employment.
 - d. Number of hours per week you worked, if other than full-time (40 hours/week).
 - e. Your job series and grade (if you were a federal employee).
- Your specific duties and responsibilities. Do not assume your job title is self-explanatory.
- Any licenses or certificates you have that are relevant to the job, such as a driver's license, professional engineer's certification, etc., as well as the state or other authority that issued the license or certificate.
- Any skills you have (including language skills) and how you acquired them. For example, you might state that you can speak Spanish after having taken 16 semester hours in college courses in that language. Be specific when describing skills. For example, if you can type tell how many words per minute.
- Your date of birth, if you are applying for a federal job with an age restriction. Any restrictions will be listed on the Federal Job Opportunity List.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has developed a number of new initiatives for the public to obtain federal job information.

- a. Touchscreen computer system which provides nationwide federal job information at the touch of a finger. This system is currently in the major Federal Employment Information Centers.
- b. The Career America Connection allows anyone interested in federal career opportunities to call (478) 757-3000 to receive information about current federal vacancies, the federal hiring process, or obtain federal application materials. This service is available nationwide, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to both rotary and touchtone callers.
- c. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)-Philly Bulletin Board System (BBS) allows computer users to obtain information about Federal nationwide job announcements, Federal pay information, and a host of other information by visiting the USA JOBS web site at www.usajobs.com.
- d. The Federal Job Opportunities Board (FJOB) BBS allows computer users to call 912-757-3000 or visit the USAJOBS web site at www.usajobs.com to obtain Federal nationwide job opportunities.

State Government

There are a number of avenues through which you can find positions within the State Government. To use Pennsylvania as an example, you can apply for State positions by doing the following:

For State Civil Service openings:

1. First, you must enroll with the Pennsylvania CareerLink.
 - a. Go to the PA CareerLink web site at www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us.
 - b. Click on Job Seeker Services
 - c. Click on Enrollment, fill out the step-by-step form, and create a username and password.
 - d. Log onto the PA CareerLink web site using your username and password
 - e. Click on Job Seeker Services

- f. Click on State Civil Service where you will be able to download an application and pick a testing site. (Altoona no longer gives state civil service tests, so if you check Altoona, you will automatically be sent to Huntingdon to take the state civil service test on a Saturday.)
2. After you determine job listings that may be of interest to you, review the examination announcements for these positions. The Announcements describe the work involved, as well as the qualifications, salary, and type of testing required. From these announcements you can determine whether or not you are interested and qualified. If you do not meet the requirements, you will not be considered. You can find the announcements by going to the Pennsylvania CareerLink web site at www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us. You can also go the PA CareerLink office at 3001 Fairway Drive, Altoona or call them at 814-940-6200.
3. Complete an application in accordance with the procedures described on the announcement. Application forms are available online by first enrolling with the PA CareerLink. Each Examination Announcement requires a separate application.
4. Written and performance examinations are given weekdays at Commission Offices in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. To take a test during the week, send your application to the Commission Office where you would like to be tested. Test centers are also located in: Allentown, Clearfield, Coudersport, DuBois, Erie, Harrisburg, Huntingdon, Johnstown, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Williamsport. These centers are open for testing purposes only on selected Saturdays. Indicate your choice of testing center on your application and send it to the central office in Harrisburg.
5. Applicants for testing will be notified of the date, time, and location of the test approximately 7-10 days prior to the examination.
6. Written tests will contain questions related to required knowledge, skills, and abilities for each job classification.
7. Within a few weeks of the examination, you will be notified of your score and ranking or that you did not meet the minimum qualifications. If your score is competitive, you will be contacted by appropriate agencies as vacancies occur. Appointees must serve a probationary period during which their work will be evaluated and rated. Those who successfully complete the probationary period receive regular civil service status.

For State non-civil service positions, you can apply in one of two ways. You can request an application from the Division of State Employment or contact agencies in which you are interested to see what positions are available and to receive an application. Because there is no job listing available, it is necessary for you to research State agencies and departments to learn about job opportunities.

Finally, if you are interested in working within the legislative or judicial branch of State Government, your job search will require personal contact. For the legislative branch, personal staff positions are acquired through word-of-mouth (networking) and by contacting a state legislator or his/her staff members. If you are interested in seeking a job on a state legislator's staff, you may consult the volume entitled *State Elected Officials and the Legislatures*. If you are interested in working for a legislative agency or standing committee of the State House or Senate, consult the volume entitled *State Legislative Leadership, Committees, and Staff*. Within the judicial arena, many of the position openings are announced through county or city personnel offices. Your best approach, again, is to contact individuals through referrals and informational interviews, and leave copies of your resume. Two resources on the State courts are *Want's Federal-State Court Directory* and the *Directory of State Court Clerks and County Courthouses*. These resources should be available at public or university libraries.

Local Government

Local governments perform the street-level work necessary to keep communities functioning. They provide service delivery to specific neighborhoods: fire and police protection, health, education, sanitation, maintenance, and parks and recreation.

The best local government opportunities will be found in larger, more diverse, and financially healthy units of government. These consist of large urban county governments, municipalities with populations over 100,000, and large school districts. Because local governments perform numerous functions similar to what may be found in large organizations in the private sector, you may find such job opportunities: accountants, computer programmers, engineers, planners, employment specialists, architects, museum workers, and mid-level managers.

There appears to be no single strategy for finding a local government position. In Philadelphia, for example, you can go to an Application Center to look at job listings, apply for positions, and if qualified take a City Civil Service test. If you pass, your name will be added to a list of eligible candidates and stays there for up to two years unless you are hired. County government positions in the Philadelphia area most likely require you to take a State Civil Service exam. In smaller municipalities, some county government positions will require the State Civil Service exam while others require your completing a standard application. Positions in city/borough/township government offices often have standard applications for interested individuals to complete.

Research is the key to a successful job search campaign in local government. Locate the agencies and departments in which you are interested and contact them to learn about the application procedures. Network as well; doing this can give you more information about the local hiring culture as well as names of people who have the power to hire. One of the best sources of information to begin with is the telephone book for the area in which you are interested. The blue pages contain information on the municipal and county government agencies for that area. A local public library should also have information on file.

Organizations on the Periphery

Many organizations are not part of the federal or state government system but work very closely with these governments in the public arena. These organizations range from nonprofit foundations and charitable organizations to lobbyists, professional associations, and consulting firms. They may represent social or political groups, provide contractual services to government agencies, promote social programs, attempt to influence public policy, perform public functions, or promote political candidates. Some private organizations have government affairs offices that monitor legislative activities and the effects those activities may have on the organization. In effect, these peripheral organizations, while not part of the government system, are engaged in very public activities.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

- Trade and Professional Organizations
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Research Organizations
- Law Firms
- International Organizations and Groups
- Lobbying and Law Groups
- Contracting and Consulting Firm

These organizations tend to be located in and around Washington, DC or the state capitals where they would have access to legislative and governmental offices. Many organizations are small, but offer quite extensive job responsibilities. As a job seeker, your job search will entail a great deal of networking and cold calling. Few of these organizations offer life-long opportunities because of their small size.

Some suggested reference materials to identify these organizations include:

- The Encyclopedia of Associations
- The Directory of National Trade and Professional Associations in the United States
- The Consultants and Consulting Organizations Directory
- The Foundation Directory
- Research Centers Directory

Capitol Hill

Compared to the number of employees of the federal government, the number of people employed on Capitol Hill is relatively small. Still, though, Capitol Hill offers a variety of exciting opportunities in assisting senators and representatives in researching and writing bills, answering constituent inquiries, and offering advice (based on extensive research) to these legislators on issues currently facing Congress. Also, because the working conditions are often stressful and fast paced, turnover hovers around 40% annually.

Opportunities on the Hill can be found in legislative agencies such as the General Accounting Office and the Library of Congress, on personal staffs of members of congress, and in the judicial system. The job search for each of these areas differs, though each relies heavily on networking and "pounding the pavement."

Legislative agencies provide information for decision making and dissemination purposes, and monitor actions of executive agencies. These agencies generally follow recruitment procedures similar to those of executive agencies with position announcements, application forms, testing, eligibility lists, etc. The legislative branch, though, operates under its own rules, classifications, and salaries. As each legislative agency recruits its own personnel, you will need to contact each agency to learn about its particular selection procedures.

Congressional offices, committees, and subcommittees offer hundreds of opportunities. In fact, there are 535 federal congressional staffs and over 300 committees and subcommittees. Personal congressional staffs offer opportunities both in Washington and in home districts. While not on "the Hill," there are similar opportunities in state congressional offices, committees and subcommittees (see section on state government). The following is a typical hierarchy of personal staff positions:

Member

Administrative Assistant

Administrative Staff

1. Washington
Office Manager
Scheduler
Personal Secretary
Clerk Typist
2. Home District
District Office
Representative
Receptionist

Constituent Services

Case Worker
Grants Specialist
Mobile Office
Operator

Legislative Staff

Chief Legislative Aide
Legislative Assistant
Researcher

Computer Services

Computer Operator
Legislative Correspondent

Other Staff

Press Secretary
Special Projects
Interns

Krannich, R.L. & Krannich, C.R. (1990). The Complete Guide to Public Employment

For the various standing, select, joint, and ad hoc committees, staffs conduct research, write reports, and draft legislation for committee members. Positions on these staffs usually are for subject matter experts or for those persons with experience on the Hill. These positions tend to pay better than personal staff positions.

If you are interested in working in congressional and committee offices, the job search is much less structured. It will involve knocking on doors, making personal contacts, networking and a great deal of persistence and luck. Competition is fierce. Often the best time for a job search is immediately following an election, but personal contact will be important, as you will be competing with all those individuals who lost their positions due to the election.

The Senate has a placement office:

Senate Placement Office
Room 142B — Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20150
202/224-9167

Two other agencies also provide assistance:

House Democratic Caucus
1420 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 226-3210

House Republican Conference
1010 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-5107

A good resource for the Hill job seeker:

Capitol Hill: An Insider's Guide to Finding a Job in Congress

The Judiciary offers fewer opportunities in the Washington, DC area but quite a few across the U.S. Most positions are for legal specialists and administrative support staff and require formal legal training, law degrees, and bar certification. Most job vacancies tend to be announced through word-of-mouth.

Two good resources for a job seeker are:

Want's Federal-State Court Directory
Directory of State Court Clerks and County Courthouses

Conclusion

"Working for the Government" has quite a few different meanings as shown on this site. If you are considering this sector of the work world, your job search will entail research into the various options available to you. Combine formal and informal job search activities to conduct the best job search for this field.

Additional Resources

These books can be found in most public or university libraries:

Adzigan, D.A. (ed.) Encyclopedia of Governmental Advisory Organizations. (Bi-annual).
Detroit: Gale Research Company.

Cahill, N. Federal Executive Directory (Bimonthly). Washington: Carroll Publishing Co.

Cook, B.K. Federal Yellow Book (Quarterly). Washington: The Washington Monitor, Inc.
Council of State Governments (Iron Works Pike, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578)

The Book of States

National Organization of State Government Officials

State Administrative Officials Classified by Function

State Elected Officials and Legislatures

State Legislative Leadership, Committees, and Staff

State Government News (monthly magazine)

State Government (quarterly journal)

State Government Research Checklist

Green, P. (Ed.) State Executive Directory (Triennial). Washington: Carroll Publishing Co.

Lukoski, S. and Grayson C.T. (1990). State Information Book. Washington: Potomac Books, Inc.

McLean J. (ed.) Consultants and Consulting Organizations Directory. Detroit: Gale Research Company.

Scheiber, J. (ed.) Congressional Yellow Book (Annual). Washington: The Washington Monitor, Inc.

Watkins, M.M. (ed.) Research Centers Directory. Detroit: Gale Research Company.

The National Directory of State Agencies (Information Resource Press).

Resources Available in the Career Resource Library (126 Slep)

America's Federal Jobs – 1991

American Foreign Service Officer – 1992

The Book of U.S. Government Jobs – 2002

Career Opportunities with the Federal Government (Video)

Careers for Patriotic Types & Others Who Want to Serve Their Country – 2000

Civil Service Career Starter

Civil Service Job Opportunities (Information Binder)

Federal Civil Service Jobs – 2000

The Federal Government: Presidential Management Intern Program (Video)

The Federal Government: Student Employment Programs (Video)

Federal Jobs – The Ultimate Guide – 1991 & 1997

Government Job Finder – 1997-2000

Guide to America's Federal Jobs – 2001

Opportunities in Government Careers – 2001

Real People Working in Government – 1998