

What Interests You? Define Your Interests

Use this section to help you figure out what kind of work you would like to do and what kind of jobs might be good for you. Read the activities below. Decide if you would enjoy doing that activity. If you would, you might like a job in that field.

Do you want to get training for some kind of work, improve yourself in some way, learn a new skill like cooking or tuning an engine, or learn another language?

If so, you may want to focus on education. Some ways to do this would be to get your GED, go to college or junior college, enroll in a technical or business school, or take classes at the local community center.

Do you want to see new places, meet people from other places, try new and different foods, or learn about customs that are different from your own?

If so, you may want to focus on travel and learning about new cultures. Some ways to do this would be to take a tour, travel to new places, find a job that includes travel, visit an art exhibit/movie/restaurant about another culture, or take language/cooking/art classes about different cultures.

Do you want to get a job, learn new work skills, win promotions on the job, or be known as a good worker?

If so, you may want to focus on career. Some ways to do this would be to find a job or change jobs, learn new jobs skills (either at your current job or by taking classes), work with a job counselor or your boss to identify your career goals and work toward them, or take on new projects at work and apply for a raise or promotion.

Do you want to own your own home or car; buy nice clothes, furniture or electronic equipment; save for school, retirement or a vacation?

If so, you may want to focus on finances. Some ways to do this would be to start saving money, get a job or work toward a promotion or raise, talk to a financial advisor about creating a budget and investing your money, and looking at ways to increase your income.

Do you want to drive a taxi, delivery van, tow truck, bulldozer or forklift; parking cars; running factory machines?

If so, you may want to focus on driving or operating machines. Some kinds of jobs include taxi driver, delivery person, construction worker, parking attendant, machinist, truck or tow truck driver, and subway or bus operator.

Do you want to repair washing machines, radios and TV sets, cars and trucks, leaky sinks and pipes, worn-out furniture, vending machines or computers?

If so, you may want to focus on being a repairperson. Some kinds of jobs include plumber, carpenter, mechanic, furniture repairperson, and machine repairperson.

Do you want to help nurses in a hospital, help a teacher in a school, care for small children, help people have fun, care for animals, or help elderly people?

If so, you may want to focus on working as a caretaker or assistant. Some kinds of jobs include nurse's aide, teacher's aide, babysitter, camp/daycare/nursing home/hospital worker, caretaker, activity director, and veterinarian's assistant.

What Are Your Goals? Goals Checklist

This list will help you think about some of the things you want in life. Each thing you want then becomes a goal. Once you know what you want, you can create a plan for how to get what you want.

Do you want to...?

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Do you want to...?

Get a job, learn new work skills, win promotions on the job, be known as a good worker. If so, you may want to focus on career. Some ways to do this would be to find a job or change jobs, learn new jobs skills (either at your current job or by taking classes), work with a job counselor or your boss to identify your career goals and work toward them, or take on new projects at work and apply for a raise or promotion.

Do you want to...?

Own your own home or car; buy nice clothes, furniture or electronic equipment; save for school, retirement or a vacation. If so, you may want to focus on finances. Some ways to do this would be to start saving money, get a job or work toward a promotion or raise, talk to a financial advisor about creating a budget and investing your money, and looking at ways to increase your income.

Do You want to...?

Get married, raise children, buy a home, spend most of your free time with your family. If so, you may want to focus on building/improving family relations. Some ways to do this include becoming more involved with other family members (attending important events in their lives, learning about their hobbies and making time for them); rearranging your work schedule to spend more time with family; working out family problems through talking or counseling; committing to loved ones and partners and starting a family; and planning family outings and vacations.

Do you want to...?

Make new friends; join clubs, teams, or other groups; go to lots of parties, movies, shows and concerts. If so, you may want to focus on social life. Some ways to do this include joining new clubs and organizations, taking classes and attending events where you can meet new people, planning events where people can meet (picnics, movie outings, etc.), and making time for your existing friends and family and letting them know you want to build your social life.

Do you want to...?

Help improve your community; help out at hospitals, nursing homes, daycare centers, and schools; raise money for good causes; become involved in politics and policy making. If so, you may want to focus on charity and good deeds. Some ways to do this include volunteering at the local library, school, hospital, etc.; donating money, goods, or time to charities; helping raise money for local charities; and registering to vote and teaching others about activism.

What Do You Want and What Can You Give?

When trying to decide what kind of job you want and before starting your job search, it may be helpful to figure out what kind of work you would like to do and what kind of skills you already have. The questions on this worksheet are meant to help. Write down your skills and work experience (and again, try to think of additional skills and experience you may have.) At the end you should have several sentences that will help describe the kind of job you would like to do and what kind of job experience you have.

Your next step will be to find a job that meets the requirements you have and for which you have the required skills!

Working Conditions

Ask yourself these questions.

1. Would you like to work indoors or outdoors?
2. Would you like a job working alone or in a group?
3. Would you like a job working with people or things?
4. Would you prefer to move around while working or sit in one place?
5. Would you like to work in a lively place or a quiet place?
6. Would you like a job where you wear a uniform, dressy clothes or casual clothes?
7. Would you like to do the same task every day or work on different tasks throughout the day?
8. Would you like a job that requires little or no special training, some training, or special training?
9. Would you like a job where you are closely supervised or where you manage yourself?
10. Would you like to work in the same office or place or would you like to travel around for your job?

Write down your answers.

I would prefer a job that allows me to work ... : (Example: I would like a job that allows me to work indoors, in a group, with people, move around, in a lively place, wear casual clothes, do different tasks, no special skills, where I'm not closely supervised, and work in the same place.)

Work Experience

Ask yourself these questions.

1. Do I have experience driving or operating vehicles? (Can I operate a car, van, motorcycle, or truck; a tractor, lawn mower, or farm equipment; snow plow, forklift, or bulldozer; video or camera equipment; special machinery?)
2. Do I have experience with mechanics or repairing things? (Can I fix toys or furniture; bikes or cars; stereo, TV or video equipment; electrical wiring and appliances; plumbing and household problems?)
3. Do I have experience with office equipment and office skills? (Can I use a computer, typewriter, copy machine, or calculator; file or organize papers, files or books; answer phones, take messages, and interact with people professionally?)
4. Do I have experience caring for others? (Do I have experience taking care of young children or older adults; do I have experience taking care of people who are sick or have disabilities; have I organized parties, events, class outings, or family activities?)
5. Do I have experience cleaning and cooking? (Can I wash dishes, sweep and mop, dust and vacuum; can I cook or help prepare food; can I sew or mend clothing?)

Write down your answers.

I have experience doing the following ... : (Example: I have experience driving a car and van, doing light filing and answering phones, caring for my younger sisters and grandparents, cleaning and making simple meals.)

Now that you know what kind of job interests you and some of the skills you already have, you can start looking for a job that meets your requirements and for which you have the required skills. For example, the person above wants to work with a lot of people in a lively and casual setting, and has experience taking care of children and elderly people. They might enjoy and do well with a job in a school, daycare center, nursing home, or recreation center.

What I Want and Need in a Job. Do I Need Training?

This section will help you identify what you want and need in a job. Read the questions below and write down your answers.

What would I like to do most if I had the training?

For example, "I would like to be a teacher or a veterinarian."

What would I like to do that I can do right now with no further training?

For example, "I can baby-sit and take care of my neighbor's pets."

What training would I take if I had the chance to do what I wanted?

For example, "I'd like to go to college or veterinary school."

Is there any way for me to get this training? How?

For example, "I would need to get my GED and enroll in college or vocational school."

What am I doing right now to improve my skills?

For example, "I'm studying so I can get my GED" or "I am working as a teacher's aide to learn more about teaching."

What could I do later to improve my skills if I wanted to?

For example, "I could sign up for a class at community college" or "I could get a job as an assistant in a veterinarian's office."

Quick Tips for a Successful Job Search

Network!

Tell everyone you know that you are looking for employment. Research shows that most people find jobs through networking and applying directly to an employer.

Make a "To Do" list each day.

Follow up on any leads you have immediately and, if possible, apply for jobs as soon as they are posted and early in the day. This makes a good impression.

Keep an organized list of employers contacted, dates of contact, and people with whom you've talked to about employment.

Be sure and keep the list current and to keep in touch with potential employers and related contacts.

Create a resume.

Visit the next section on resume writing to learn more.

Send a cover letter when inquiring about or applying to job.

Letters should be typed, have good grammar and spelling and give basic information such as your name, address, phone number and job skills, and contain a request for a job interview.

Research potential employers before applying for or interviewing for a position so that you know more about the company.

Call employers to find out the best days and times to make job applications. Consider applying to several companies in the same area to save time and money.

Be prepared.

Show up to your interview on time and have everything you need for your job search and interviews. **This includes your resume, references, any professional certificates or school records (especially important if this is your first job), pens, writing paper, and identification (such as your driver's license and/or social security card).**

Tips for Filling Out Paper Job Application Forms

Filling out paper job application forms may require a shift in what you write, because you have to sign them, **making the application form a legal document**. Lies can come back to bite you.

Stick to the facts as you follow these rules:

- If you can, take the application home where you won't be rushed and can spend adequate time polishing your application to get it just right. Photocopy the application form before you begin in case you find errors on the original (or spill coffee on it) and need a clean copy.
- If asked for salary history, give your base salary (or add commission and bonuses), do not include benefits.
- Give a complete employment history in months and years, including trivial three-week jobs that you wisely left off the resume. If you don't tell the whole story, you leave a loophole of withholding information that later can be used against you.
- Verify all dates of employment and salaries to the letter.
- Enter the full name and last known address of former employers. If former employers are no longer available, don't substitute coworkers.
- Unless you have a condition directly affecting your ability to do the job for which you're applying, you need not elaborate on any disability.
- Divulge any criminal record unless your records are sealed.
- Sign the application; you've been honest — why worry?

Writing the Right Resume

One of the best ways of giving employers useful information about your background and experience is to prepare a resume. Resumes are especially important if you are applying for a position that is professional, administrative, sales, clerical or skilled.

There is a lot of information on how to write a good resume. People have written articles, Web sites, and even books on the topic, but there are some basics that every strong resume should include. Resumes should:

- Be typed (using a computer) and printed on good paper
- Be only one page (front only)
- Have no spelling or grammar mistakes
 - Include your
- Personal information (name, address, phone number)
- Work experience (including the company where you worked, the dates you worked there, and your job title and your job responsibilities; most people list their current or most recent job first and work backwards to their oldest job)
- Qualifications (special skills, talents, accomplishments, degrees)
- Education and any technical/professional training
- References (names and contact information of people who can act as references)

If you are applying for a position in unskilled labor, factory work or quick turnover jobs, you may want to consider preparing a job card. Job card information can be placed on note cards and should include the following information: name, phone number, position desired, skills and a short statement of your special abilities and work ethics.

For more information on writing a resume or to see examples, visit your local library, or look on the Internet.

Interviewing for the Job: Making a Good Impression

Many employers want to interview people in person before they hire them. Making a good impression at a job interview can do a lot toward helping you get the job.

Here are some simple tips to get you prepared for job interviews.

Before the interview:

- Research the company and the available position.
- Have a practice interview, either with a friend, or by yourself. Anticipate what kinds of questions you would be asked and how you would answer them.

Know with whom, where, and when your interview is held and how to get there.

Be prepared:

- Ask the company or person interviewing you if you need to bring anything special to the interview.
- Bring extra copies of your resume, identification, references with addresses and phone numbers.

Bring a written list of questions for the person interviewing you about the job and the company.

Day of the interview:

- Show up for your interview on time.
- Dress professionally and be well groomed. While not every company requires people to wear business suits, you should dress and look professional for your interview (even if it means you are overdressed for the occasion!) Again, it's fine to ask the interviewer before your interview how you should dress.
- Introduce yourself to your interviewer and shake hands. Be sure to thank the interviewer for seeing you.
- Use good posture, be polite, and keep eye contact throughout the interview.

Use good listening and communication skills. Listen carefully to the interviewer and answer their questions as best as you can. Be cheerful and enthusiastic when talking.

Follow up:

- Send a thank you card, letter, or email. Thank the interviewer for their time, restate your interest in the position and availability to start work.
- Call back in a few days to see if a decision has been made.

Once You Are Hired

Once you have found a job you like, you'll want to keep it. Some employees are on a probationary (trial) period. If you are, find out how long the period is and what will be expected of you during that time. The probationary period is for your employer to decide whether or not you are the best person for the job. It is also for you to decide if the job is right for you.

You may also want to find out if and when you will have an employee evaluation. Ask your manager or boss what kinds of things they are looking for and what you will be evaluated on. If possible get an evaluation form before your evaluation and discuss your progress with your manager. Ask yourself if you think you are doing what is necessary to get a good evaluation.

Good Employee Checklist

Here are some quick tips to being a good employee. Ask yourself daily if you are meeting the requirements below. Also, be sure to check regularly with your manager or supervisor to see if you are meeting his or her expectations and if there are new or additional things you could be doing.

- I get to work on time. If I am going to be late, I call and let my boss know.
- I rarely miss work. If I am going to miss work, I let my boss know ahead of time (or call if I am sick.)
- I work as hard as I can.
- I pay attention to my work.
- I do my work as I am told. If I am unable to do something or have questions, I ask my supervisor or coworkers.
- I am friendly on the job.
- I try to solve problems that come up.
- I follow safety and company rules.
- I use materials properly.
- I behave professionally.

Questions and Answers about the ADA

Employers must give qualified individuals access to employment, make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, and define essential functions of a job. They cannot set up eligibility requirements or screening requirements that keep people with disabilities from applying for jobs or taking tests for job. Here are answers to some commonly asked questions about the ADA.

Q. Is an employer required to provide reasonable accommodation when I apply for a job?

A. Yes. Applicants, as well as employees, are entitled to reasonable accommodation. For example, an employer may be required to provide a sign language interpreter during a job interview for an applicant who is deaf or hearing impaired, unless to do so would impose an undue hardship.

Q. Should I tell my employer that I have a disability?

A. If you think you will need a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions, you should inform the employer that an accommodation will be needed. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation only for the physical or mental limitation of a qualified individual with a disability of which they are aware. Generally, it is the responsibility of the employee to inform the employer that an accommodation is needed.

Q. Do I have to pay for a needed reasonable accommodation?

A. No. The ADA requires that the employer provide the accommodation unless to do so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business. If the cost of providing the needed accommodation would be an undue hardship, the employee must be given the choice of providing the accommodation or paying for the portion of the accommodation that causes the undue hardship.

Q. Can an employer lower my salary or pay me less than other employees doing the same job because I need a reasonable accommodation?

A. No. An employer cannot make up the cost of providing a reasonable accommodation by lowering your salary or paying you less than other employees in similar positions.

Q. Does an employer have to make non-work areas used by employees, such as cafeterias, lounges, or employer-provided transportation accessible to people with disabilities?

A. Yes. The requirement to provide reasonable accommodation covers all services, programs, and non-work facilities provided by the employer. If making an existing facility accessible would be an undue hardship, the employer must provide a comparable facility that will enable a person with a disability to enjoy benefits and privileges of employment similar to those enjoyed by other employees, unless to do so would be an undue hardship.

Questions and Answers about the ADA

- Q. If an employer has several qualified applicants for a job, is the employer required to select a qualified applicant with a disability over other applicants without a disability?
- A. No. The ADA does not require that an employer hire an applicant with a disability over other applicants because the person has a disability. The ADA only prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. It makes it unlawful to refuse to hire a qualified applicant with a disability because he or she is disabled or because a reasonable accommodation is required to make it possible for this person to perform essential job functions.
- Q. Can an employer refuse to hire me because he believes that it would be unsafe, because of my disability, for me to work with certain machinery required to perform the essential function of the job?
- A. The ADA permits an employer to refuse to hire an individual if he or she poses a direct threat to the health or safety of himself or herself or others. A direct threat means a significant risk of substantial harm. The determination that there is a direct threat must be based on objective, factual evidence regarding an individual's present ability to perform essential functions of a job. An employer cannot refuse to hire you because of slightly increased risk or because of fears that there might be a significant risk sometime in the future. The employer must also consider whether a risk can be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level with a reasonable accommodation.
- Q. Can an employer offer a health insurance policy that excludes coverage for pre-existing conditions?
- A. Yes. The ADA does not affect pre-existing condition clauses contained in health insurance policies even though such clauses may adversely affect employees with disabilities more than other employees.