This guide is designed to provide you with some basic tips and information on various career-related topics in a quick-reference format. Each section is only a brief overview of the topic it covers, but information is provided at the end on the resources and reference materials that were consulted in the creation of this guide. You are encouraged to review these materials – and any others you may find on your own – if you would like more detailed information related to career preparation and similar topics.

While no reputable school can guarantee employment, Perry Technical Institute is here to assist you in your efforts. Please contact PTI Career Services if you have any questions about the information provided in this guide, or if you would like to schedule an appointment for assistance with résumés, cover letters, mock interviews, or job search strategies.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Goals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry-level Positions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Do Employers Want?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Skills</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How Do I Start Networking?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Join an Organization</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Companies of Interest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Informational Interviewing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Résumés</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Getting Started</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transferable Skills</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Setting Yourself Apart</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organizing Your Résumé</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover Letters</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Job Search</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do You Have Any Questions?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Follow-Up</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Questions for Info. Interview</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Cover Letter Outline</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Résumé Outline</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Reference Sheet</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Resources</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Bonding Program</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Resources</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Reading</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Tracking Sheets</td>
<td>41-45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting Goals

The job search begins long before your final term of classes. Essentially your job search began when you chose to attend Perry Tech and determined your program of study. The first thing you must do when beginning your job search is decide:

Decide what type of company you want to work for and what type of work within your field you want to do; decide what you will accept in terms of entry-level salary; decide if relocation is an option for you; decide to make a plan, set realistic goals and act on them; decide to get out of your comfort zone; decide that you will not procrastinate. But most importantly, you must decide how much time and effort you will devote to achieving your career goals, and how persistent you will be in meeting them.

These decisions aren’t something you should arrive at the week before graduation. This is something you should already be thinking about in your first quarter or trimester of school. While your goals may change or grow as you continue on through your chosen course of study, it will make all the difference in the world to write down your plan of action and begin the process as early as possible.

Are you someone who tends to wait until the last minute to get things done? Now is the time to start changing those old patterns and develop new habits. Starting today – right now – begin to develop your career goals and your plan to achieve them.
Entry-Level Positions

Your training is preparing you for an entry-level position in your field. This term implies many things to different people, but should by no means carry a negative connotation. When you are looking for an entry-level position in your chosen field, you are essentially looking for an opportunity to grow in your trade and to acquire new skills while perfecting the ones you already have. You are seeking to gain more knowledge and possibly specialize in a particular segment of your field.

What does entry-level mean?

- Requires certain minimum skill-set just to be considered a qualified applicant.
- Current knowledge in your field is broad.
- More training and experience to be acquired on the job.
- You can specialize in a certain area of your industry with on-the-job (OJT) training.
- Wage earned is competitive, but lower than employees with work experience.
- Ability to move up the ladder as experience and time at company increases.

Keep these things in mind when you are setting goals for your first job, and be sure your expectations are realistic. Use the time at your first job to grow in your field and gain the critical work experience needed for your next career move.
What Do Employers Want in an Employee?

No matter which industry, employers across the board have a lot in common when it comes to hiring new employees. There are some basic qualities and work habits that they want to see in all potential new hires.

So what do employers want? They want it all – an employee who:

- can fulfill the technical requirements of the job.
- is drug-free and will submit to random screenings.
- is flexible and willing to take on any task required.
- is able to adapt positively to change.
- demonstrates excellent social skills.
- is willing to go above and beyond to get the job done.
- desires to improve/expand upon current skill-set.
- works well in a team as well as independently.
- performs well under pressure.
- consistently meets deadlines.
- takes pride in doing the job well.
- manages time effectively.
- is trustworthy and loyal.
- has a positive and friendly attitude.
- communicates clearly and effectively.
- deals with the public and co-workers in a professional and courteous manner.

These represent just some of the traits an employer could be looking for. What kinds of things can you bring to the table? Take time to jot down the positive traits you already possess, and work to attain more.
The Importance of Soft Skills

Many of the qualities employers are looking for are considered to be “soft skills,” and are generally related to attitude, behavior, interpersonal skills and all other types of non-technical skills.

Why are soft skills so important?

No matter which industry you are pursing a career in, you will always be working with or around other people, whether it is other co-workers, the public or both. Employers want to hire people who have the ability to get along well with others, are courteous, and capable of communicating thoughts and ideas clearly. And if you are working in a position that requires you to be in contact with customers, an employer wants to be sure that you will leave a positive impression with them.

If you’ve ever worked with someone who is negative, difficult to get along with, lazy or uncooperative, you know how much it can affect everyone they come into contact with. Someone with the right technical skill-set is not considered a good employee if they can’t get along with others or if they project a negative attitude.

Demonstrate to your potential employers that in addition to your technical skills, you are also a team player with a positive attitude, good manners and respect for others.
How can I improve my soft skills?
Because employers place so much value on soft skills, finding ways to improve or expand on yours is extremely important. Here are some ideas to get you started:

♫ Become more comfortable presenting ideas and speaking to groups by joining a local Toastmasters club (www.toastmasters.org).

♫ If you’re not the best at keeping track of your belongings, schoolwork, etc., develop a system that keeps you organized and orderly, and make an effort to use it every day.

♫ Practice being a proactive listener every day. Part of having good communication skills is knowing when to stop talking and start listening. Take notes to help you process what you’re hearing.

♫ If you are shy and tend to avoid group situations or speaking up, try to get out of your comfort zone and make a real effort to start conversations or participate in group activities. Remember, having excellent social skills is extremely important in any workplace.

♫ Start behaving like the professional you will soon be. Take the opportunity to develop your softer side and good work habits by treating your time here at Perry Tech as if you are already on the job: Arrive for school a little early every day; present a neat and clean appearance in clothes similar to what you would wear on the job; take pride in completing your assignments accurately and on time; keep your work area tidy and organized; try to get along with your fellow classmates, etc.

Any steps you take toward enhancing your soft skills will benefit you in the long run. Determine what areas might need the most work and do something to improve upon them.
Networking

When it comes to looking for employment, you may have heard that it’s not always what you know, but who you know. The idea that being in touch with the right people can lead to a job opportunity is not a ground-breaking concept; it just makes logical sense. While networking is only one component to an effective job search, it is an extremely important one. With an estimated two-thirds of jobs being filled through word-of-mouth, you cannot afford to ignore the importance of this tool.

There are many ways to use networking to your advantage, but the goal for every approach is ultimately the same: to put you in contact – either directly or indirectly – with those who make hiring decisions. Building a personal and professional network of contacts is like having many different people enlisted to help in your search for a career. Commit early on to making networking a part of your job search.

How do I start networking?

It can be easier to get started than you may realize. Think of everyone you already know – family, friends, neighbors, church members, etc. – and ask them to keep their eyes and ears open for any potential leads or for information about the companies that interest you. These people are part of your inner circle and are likely to know you best, and this an easy place to begin the networking process.
How do I network with professionals in my field?

This part can be a little uncomfortable if you are timid or unused to initiating conversations, but it will become necessary for you to push yourself if you want to receive the benefits of professional networking. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

Join an Organization

Think about all the activities you participate in and organizations you may be involved with. Do you provide voluntary services to charitable organizations or belong to a political or religious group, professional association or hobby club? Think about all the people you would come into contact with through groups like these. Each person you know is another potential helper in your job search. These people might not always have a direct line to a hiring manager, but they could have friends, family or acquaintances who might have worthwhile information. Because networking is designed to be a long-term strategy, it is best to begin spreading the word as early as possible about who you are, what you know and what you can do. Consider finding organizations that interest you and connecting with people through them.

Research Companies of Interest

Identify various companies that hire people in your profession. Learn more about these companies through their websites, annual reports, company literature, etc. and find out who at their company is involved in making decisions about new hires in your field. Sometimes you can find this information on the company website. Depending on which program you are in, you could be looking for operations managers or directors, lead technicians, office managers or service managers. Write down all relevant contact information and save it for use in your networking and job-search efforts. If you can’t find the name of a person or specific department, it is okay to send communications to human resources.
The Informational Interview

This is a very direct – and by far the most effective – way to connect with people already working in your industry. The purpose of the informational interview is not to ask for or receive a job offer, but to gather information on different types of jobs available in your field and to meet professionals within your industry. Most people enjoy talking about themselves and what they do, so it is actually not too difficult to find professionals in your field who are willing to participate in an informational interview. After all, you’re not asking them for a job, you are merely conducting career research.

1. Identify the jobs performed at various companies that interest you, and find the right person to contact at each. This is where your prior company research comes in handy. You need to find out the names, titles, and contact information for the people you want to interview.

2. Spend some time absorbing as much information as you can from the company website and any news articles you find about the company. You don’t want to ask questions that can easily be answered by going online. You will want to ask intelligent, thoughtful questions.

3. Write a formal letter or e-mail requesting 20-30 minutes of their time. State why you are contacting them, what kind of information you are trying to gather, and when, precisely, you will be contacting them again. Be sure to follow up at the exact date and time you said you would, and be polite and professional at all times in your interactions with them. If the answer is “no,” be courteous, thank them, and move on to another company.

4. Prepare ahead of time a list of questions you want to ask. You are there to interview them, so you will be responsible for providing most of the talking points; be sure you have enough to keep the conversation going. For a list of sample questions, please turn to page 33.
5. You should follow normal recommendations for interviewing such as wearing neat, clean, professional clothing and arriving early for your appointment. The interview may also be conducted via telephone if the company is out-of-area or if it’s what they prefer.

6. Be sure to thank them sincerely for their time. It is okay to ask them for the names of other people in the field that may also be good sources of information for your career research.

7. Mail a thank-you letter within 1-2 days of your informational interview. You want to leave them with the impression that you are courteous and appreciative. Recap any part of the informational interview that you found especially fascinating and ask them to contact you in the future if there are any new and interesting developments related to the industry, their company or their job.

8. Take time to think about what you learned from the interview. Is that particular line of work something you would enjoy? Is that company one you could see yourself working for? What did you like best/least about the interviewee’s job?

9. Identify other people from different categories of your field and begin the process again.

While this networking tool is not conducted for the purpose of receiving a job offer, that can sometimes be an outcome. One statistic shows that approximately one out of every 200 submitted résumés results in a job offer, while one in every 12 informational interviews leads to a job offer. Every person you are interviewing is already working within your chosen industry, and they are connected with many others also working in your field – don’t underestimate the power of word-of-mouth. If you begin to conduct career research early, your professional network should be ready to produce results by the time you graduate and are ready to enter the workforce. It is never too late to begin conducting informational interviews, so get started!
Résumé Basics

- Through the content, seek to answer the question: *Why hire you instead of someone else with similar skills?*
- Choose an eye-catching format/design.
- Select fonts that are easy to read and use them consistently.
- Never lie or embellish on your résumé (or job application).
- Use correct grammar and spelling.
- Choose words that convey confidence in your abilities.
- Always proofread and have someone else proof it, too.

*What Format Should I Use?*

There are several ways to format your résumé:

**Chronological**
- Organized by work experience in reverse chronological order
- Job/company/accomplishments
- Typically used if work history relates to job applying for

**Functional**
- Organized by skills and functions instead of employment
- Employment history listed as a separate section
- Typically used if past experience is diverse/unrelated to your field
- Experience is mostly gained from simulated environment/classroom

**Targeted**
- Create a different résumé for each position applied for
- Organize by skills/functions transferred from previous experience
- Focus on a specific, targeted position/job description

**Combination**
- Uses elements from various formats to create best representation
- Most students/recent grads use a Targeted/Functional résumé

For a sample outline with instructions, visit [www.perrytech.edu/students/careers.html](http://www.perrytech.edu/students/careers.html) under the *Forms* tab.
Getting Started

Take time to write down some important information about yourself:

- Identify three desirable skills or characteristics typical for employees in your field.
- List three strengths you have and give example of each.
- Brainstorm your major accomplishments.
- Write a brief statement about yourself that you’d want an employer to know.
- Document your relevant life experiences.
- Create an outline of various résumé headings, and list everything you can think of for each.
- Begin to fine-tune your résumé into a compelling representation of you.

At this stage, don’t worry about organization or having too much information. What’s important now is to get as much as possible on paper so you will have more than enough to work with when determining which pieces are worth including in the final product.
What information should never be included on my résumé?

For one reason or another, there are some things you do not want to include on your résumé. Be aware of the following items and take care not to include them:

- Height, weight, age, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, sex, race, health, Social Security Number
- Religion, church affiliations, political affiliations
- Reasons for leaving previous job(s)
- Name of boss or supervisor
- Picture of yourself
- Salary history information
- References (these should be on a separate sheet)

What information should I have on my résumé?

At minimum, your résumé should provide your name and contact information, education, and experience. Depending on your background, you may choose to also include details about:

- Professional Profile
- Qualifications
- Licenses/Certifications
- Accomplishments/Achievements
- Transferable Skills
- Professional Affiliations
- Languages
- Public speaking
- Military Service

An important note about your e-mail address

Make sure your e-mail address is professional and appropriate. Your handle must not contain information that will reveal your age, year of birth or anything offensive or immature. Consider creating a new e-mail account that you will use only for your job search and keep your new handle clean and simple.
Transferable Skills

Think back on your previous work history and other experiences, and the types of skills and abilities (and soft skills) you’ve obtained as a result. Many of these things can be applied to your new career, even if it’s in an entirely different field. Write down the skills you’ve acquired during the course of previous work or life experiences and how they relate to your new career path.

What are transferable skills and why are they important?

- Skills obtained through any of your experiences that can apply to the kind of job you are seeking.
- Emphasizes what you can do rather than where you have worked.
- Tries to match your skills to the position for which you are applying.
- Those who successfully illustrate transferable skills will be most likely to get interviews.

Successfully documenting your transferable skills and relating them to the job you seek is extremely important. Some examples of transferable skills include:

- Implementing decisions
- Cooperating
- Enforcing policies
- Being punctual
- Managing time
- Attending to detail
- Meeting goals
- Enlisting help
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting and meeting deadlines
- Organizing
- Making decisions
Setting Yourself Apart

When documenting your skills and abilities on your résumé, it is imperative to not only ensure the validity and relevance of the information you’re including, but to also help a prospective employer see the value in choosing you as an employee. Show the hiring manager what sets you apart from the rest of the applicants and makes your unique combination of training, skills, and characteristics the right choice for the company. Through your résumé (and interview), you should be able to:

✦ Know and express what you're worth to an employer.
✦ Identify what uniquely qualifies you for the job you seek.
✦ Position yourself as an asset with real capital value.
✦ Express accomplishments in terms of quantity whenever possible.
✦ Demonstrate that you’ve developed your soft skills.

When you’re ready to compile your notes and create a résumé, you can perform a word-search online for sample résumés to get some ideas on how to organize and format your own. Just be sure that you are using them only as a reference or for inspiration and not copying content. You want your résumé to be truthful, original and all about you.
Organizing Your Résumé

In general, employers may only spend about 20-30 seconds scanning a résumé. Because their first review is so brief, it is important to organize your résumé in a way that highlights the most relevant information first. A targeted résumé may be the most effective formatting method for providing crucial information in an appropriate order.

*If you are working with a posted job description*, review it carefully and see what skills and traits the employer is asking for in an applicant. Much of the time this will be a list of both technical and soft skills. Use the job description as your guide and address any qualities you have that align with the company’s requirements.

*If you are creating a targeted résumé for a company for which no job is actually posted*, you can spend some time reviewing the company’s website. Many times there will be valuable information on the company’s values as well as details on the types of positions it hires. Use the information you gather from the website to best organize your résumé.

Keep the following in mind when creating your résumé:

- Organize information according to desired impact on the reader.
- List the most relevant section first.
- Always list your work experience/academic information in reverse chronological order.
- Can include school coursework information if it pertains to the type of job you seek.
- Include any special skills or private training, certification, seminars.

**An important note about your outgoing phone message**

*Make certain your outgoing phone message is appropriate and professional. Employers will make a judgment call about you if your message is immature, offensive, incoherent or just plain silly. Re-record if necessary. This could be an employer’s first impression of you.*
Cover Letters

A cover letter can serve a variety of purposes and, just like your résumé, it should be targeted to a specific company and position. Some employers will ask you to provide a cover letter and résumé when you are applying for jobs, some won’t. In any case, it is a good idea to at least have some basic framework ready to go that can be tweaked for each use. No matter the type of cover letter you need to create, know that you should always plan on providing one anytime you are sending out your résumé.

What is the purpose of a cover letter?

- Introduces you and tells employer what type of position you seek.
- Invites the reader to learn more about you and read your résumé.
- Allows employers to get a sense of your communication abilities and personality.
- Shows employers how well you express yourself.
- Permits you to expand on your résumé and skill-set pertinent to the job you seek.
- Just like the résumé, its purpose is not to get you a job offer, but to get you an interview.

The Three Basic Types of Cover Letters

1. Cold-Contact/Uninvited

   With the majority of available positions residing in the hidden job market, this will likely be your most-used style of cover letter. It is completely unsolicited and is used to initiate contact with a prospective employer when there is no known job opening.
2. Invited
This cover letter is one that is provided at an employer’s request or in response to a job advertisement. If they are asking for a résumé, assume that they also expect a cover letter.

3. Referral
This cover letter is constructed as a result of your networking efforts. You will drop the name of someone (within the first paragraph) who referred you to the employer.

Anytime you are sending a cover letter, you must keep it simple, direct, and professional. And just like your résumé, it must be word-processed and free of errors. Be sure you proofread carefully (several times) and have a friend proofread, too. You may also bring your letter to PTI Career Services for review. Proofreading is extremely important; you don’t want an employer to get stuck on awkward phrases, misused words or typos.

Cover Letter Basics
- Provide a cover letter anytime you are submitting your résumé.
- Header should be identical to your résumé and reference sheet.
- Address the letter to a specific person or department.
- Keep it brief: 3-4 paragraphs and no more than one page.
- Avoid simply repeating the contents of your résumé. Instead, highlight the portions of your résumé that pertain directly to the position.
- State specifically what you can do for the company. Help them answer the question, “Why should we consider you?”
- Request an interview. Remember, this is the whole point of contacting them – ask for the interview.
- Proofread carefully, several times.
Structure of the Cover Letter

First Paragraph:
Introduce yourself and tell them why you are contacting them in a way that grabs their attention. Be specific about what type of position you are seeking and what you have to offer. If your letter is based on a referral, be sure to mention the name of the person who referred you.

Middle Paragraph(s):
Explain some of your academic and professional qualifications. Use what you know about the company or job description to guide you and identify the qualities and skills you have that match what the employer needs. Remember, these qualities may not all be technical, and some could pertain to soft skills.

You should also describe any transferable skills you have that will translate well into the position you seek. Use specific details to describe how elements from your past experience and training will allow you to meet some of the requirements of the job. Explain what interests you about this particular job, or why you want to work for this particular company.

Closing Paragraph:
Invite them to contact you, and politely request an interview. There is no need to repeat your phone number and e-mail address since they should already be provided in the header.

On page 34, you will find an outline for a cover letter. Additional guidance may also be found online at www.perrytech.edu/students/careers.html.
References

When you are sending out your résumé and cover letter, you may also need to provide a list of references to prospective employers. At the very least, you need to have your references documented and ready to go in the event they are requested.

**Whom should I use as references?**

You will need to select 3-5 people to use as references. It is best if they are professional rather than personal in nature. For example, previous or current supervisors, co-workers, and anyone who can offer insight into how you are as an employee make the best references. Family members and friends *should not* be used as references. And be sure to ask permission before listing them as a reference. You want them to be prepared to talk about you when they get the phone call.

**What information do I need to provide for each reference?**

You should detail each reference’s full name, current job title, company name, business address and contact information (e.g. phone number, cell phone, e-mail address). You may also consider adding information on their relationship to you (former co-worker, supervisor, et al.)

A sample template is provided on page 36.

**Reference Sheet Basics**

- The reference sheet should have a header *identical* to your résumé and cover letter.
- References should be professional, not personal. Ask permission before using someone as a reference.
- Use no fewer than three and no more than five references.
- Do not provide reference sheet automatically when submitting a résumé, but have it on hand for employers who request it.
- Provide complete information on each contact, including their employment information, current contact information, and relationship to you.
The Job Search

When you begin to actively identify potential employment opportunities, it is important to write down your specific goals and tasks that need to be completed in order to reach them. Begin to prepare yourself for what could be a lengthy process and decide to stay focused and persistent. There are no guarantees when it comes to employment, save one: doing nothing, will result in nothing.

The earlier you begin any activities related to your employment goals, the better. Your instructors and Career Services are here to assist you in your efforts, but you must determine your own level of involvement and set the pace. Whether you’re in your first term of classes, the last or you’ve already graduated, here are some tips and general information that can help make your job search more productive.

What kinds of search methods should I use?

There are many ways to search for jobs, and some methods are more effective than others. For a truly productive job search, you will want to use several different methods. The success rate for each listed below refers to the likelihood that it will result in a job offer when used as your only search method:

- **Posting résumé to company website or online job-board**  
  Success rate of  7%

- **Responding to ads in professional or trade journals**  
  Success rate of  7%

- **Searching internet job-postings by employers**  
  Success rate of  10%

- **Responding to Ads in Local Newspaper**  
  Success rate between 5% and 24%
Using assistance of private employment agencies
Success rate between 5% and 28%

Asking someone in your network for job leads
Success rate of 33%

Inquiring in person at companies that interest you, regardless of any known job openings
Success rate of 47%

Taking a detailed inventory of what you have to offer and what you want
Success rate of 86%

You can see how much your rate of success improves when you get away from the computer and start to interact directly with other people. It is important that you are not relying solely on internet job searches to produce results for you. Around two-thirds of available jobs are not advertised. This is why you will need to look beyond the internet and newspaper, and incorporate more and varied search methods into your job-search strategy.

Since you can’t possibly know for sure which methods are going to result in a job offer for you, the idea is to use several different search methods. Those with a lower success rate still have the potential to result in a job – just make sure you’re spending the majority of your time and effort using search methods that are more likely to produce results. For example, don’t spend more than 10% of your search time using the internet, and spend more time actively calling on companies that interest you, and connecting with and growing your network.
**Keep Track of Your Search Progress**

Create a chart to keep track of what companies you’ve contacted and when, what type of contact you made, the dates of completed steps, and the amount of time you have spent on each. Use this to keep things from slipping through the cracks and to gauge your progress. To get you started, tracking sheets are provided at the end of this guide, beginning on page 41.

**Why should I start looking for a job when I don’t graduate for a long time?**

The wheels can turn very slowly when it comes to getting hired. When employers are looking to hire new entry-level employees, they generally begin to plan and budget for this additional staff member several months (even a year) before they actually hire someone. If you begin networking and calling on companies six, nine, or twelve months before you graduate, you can create that point-of-contact with them while they are in the planning phase.

Starting your job search activities earlier rather than later will also prevent you from a panicked rush to find a job as you get closer to graduation. Your career is too important to leave to chance. You must begin the process early, search often and be persistent. If you only put forth minimal effort or wait until graduation is near to begin, you will regret it.

Not sure where or how to begin? Contact PTI Career Services for some assistance in planning your job search, or visit us online at www.perrytech.edu/students/careers.html for additional resources.
Interviewing

There’s no doubt that most people can feel a little (or completely) nervous about interviewing. The only thing that is going to reduce your anxiety is simply practice and preparation. If you’ve done a good job taking an inventory of what you have to offer, you will fare better in the interview.

Thoroughly review the job description and any available company information. If you’ve already created a targeted résumé for the company and job you’re after, then you’ve already done most of your homework.

Your job search has been leading up to this. Here are some tips to help you prepare for this critical event:

A few days before the interview...

✦ Prepare printed copies of your résumé and references to bring with you.
✦ Research the company you are interviewing with and make a list of questions you want to ask.
✦ Review questions you might anticipate and prepare/practice your responses several times.
✦ Be sure nothing will get in the way of your keeping this appointment (e.g. transportation, childcare, etc).
✦ Determine what you will wear and make sure it is clean and pressed for the interview.
The day of the interview...

- Get up early and review again the job announcement, your résumé, and the company’s profile.
- Be showered, groomed, floss and brush your teeth and use mouthwash.
- Arrive at interview at least 15 minutes early.
- Do not bring anyone with you. If someone gave you a lift, they should wait in the car or leave until you are finished.
- Do not smoke in the car on the way to interview.
- Do not chew gum during the interview.
- Do not bring any food or drink with you into the interview.
- Turn off cell phone before you enter the building. Better yet, leave it in the car.

During the interview...

- Establish good eye contact.
- Shake hands with everyone in the room.
- Do not sit down until you are offered a seat.
- Be aware of your posture and body language.
- Speak clearly and enunciate your words.
- Answer every question asked (unless it is an illegal question).
- Keep answers brief, but detailed and to the point; do not ramble.
- Always try to give specific, work-related examples to the questions.
- Direct responses to all people in the room, not just the person who asked the question.
- Refer to interviewers by name if you are addressing them directly.
- Do not discuss any aspect of your personal life, if possible.
- Never talk about salary or company benefits at the interview unless the interviewer broaches the topic.
- When asked if you have any questions, you may refer to those you have already prepared (more on this later).
What are employers attempting to learn about you?

Employers will typically ask a series of questions designed to learn more about how you will fit in to their organization and what qualities you can bring to the company if hired. These questions may be a combination of personality, behavioral, and technical questions. It is difficult to know exactly which questions will be presented to you at the interview, but overall, there are five basic questions employers want answers to. These questions may either be asked of you directly, or through a series of related questions designed to gather as much relevant information about you as possible to help them make an informed hiring decision:

1. **Why are you here?**
2. **What can you do for us?**
3. **What kind of person are you?**
4. **Can I afford to hire you?**
5. **What sets you apart from other qualified applicants?**

The largest expense that any company has is associated with hiring and retaining employees and anything related to personnel costs. Consider how much a company is investing in its employees in the form of salary, benefits and training costs. They need to know that, if hired, you will give them the greatest return on their investment, the best value for their money. They need to know that you will not be a trouble-maker, whiner, or negative force within their team. They also need to know that you will reliably perform the duties required and approach challenges in a proactive manner.

Because so much capital is at stake, they may go through several rounds of interviews before coming to a decision. Be certain that you are answering their questions honestly and completely, and helping them to see that you are the right person for the job. You want to get called back for that second interview.
Some questions you could be asked during the interview:

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why should we hire you?
- Why are you interested in this company?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What is the biggest mistake you’ve made and how did you overcome it?
- How would your previous (or current) employer describe you?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Describe a time when you had multiple projects due at the same time.
- Describe a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker and explain how you resolved it.
- Why did you leave your previous employer?

Some questions are considered “trap” questions and can sometimes be a little tricky to answer. It is imperative that when responding to interview questions, you take a moment to consider exactly what they are asking, and be sure your answer is really addressing the point of the question. Be careful that you are not giving responses that reveal certain aspects of your personal life. Interviewers need information about you that will help them determine your employability, so responses that include valid work- or school-related details are usually best. Take time to write out complete responses to some typical interview questions and practice giving your responses in the mirror and in front of friends or family members. When you know exactly what information you want to convey to an employer, you are more likely to be comfortable and confident when you are interviewing.
Do You Have Any Questions?

The interviewers will inevitably conclude your time together by asking if you have any questions. What they might really be asking is: *How prepared are you? How interested are you, really, in this job or this company?*

It is extremely important that you DO ask *at least* one or two questions. Asking thoughtful, intelligent questions about the company, the job or the industry in general can show that you are inquisitive and genuinely interested in the position.

If you had any questions that came up during the course of your prior review of the company and job description, write them down and bring them with you to the interview. If not, begin to think about other types of questions you can ask. *Your questions should never be about salary, company benefits, perks, or similar topics.* A few examples of appropriate questions include:

- What does this company value most and how do you think my work for you will further these values?
- What can I bring to your company to round out the team?
- What can I do within the first 90 days of employment to best contribute to the team?
- Do you have any questions or concerns about my ability to perform this job?
- When top performers leave the company why do they leave and where do they usually go?

Employers can usually learn a lot more about you from the types of questions you ask them, not the way you respond to theirs. Do give this careful consideration before your interview.
Following-Up After the Interview

One of the most important things you can do to follow-up after your interview is to send a thank-you letter or note to the hiring manager and any others who participated in your interview. *This is something you should write and send within 24 hours after your interview.* If you have *perfect* penmanship, it is okay to write a thank-you note/card by hand. However, it is usually best to just send a formal and professional message via e-mail. Don’t forget to spell-check!

Since only about 10% of people actually follow up after an interview, completing this simple step can really help to set you apart from the competition. It is a small gesture that can carry a lot of weight, and show your potential new employer that you appreciate the time they gave you.

The content of your thank-you message should:

- Be brief and express your sincere thanks and gratitude for the time they spent with you.
- Affirm the fact that you are interested in working for them.
- Recap one or two highlights from your interview.
- Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

**CAUTION!!!**

It is possible to over-communicate with hiring managers after the interview. Send your follow-up thank you message and leave it at that. DO NOT continuously call or email to find out if you got the job. Employers have their own timelines for making hiring decisions, and you need to be respectful of that. And you certainly don’t want to be seen as a nuisance. Although waiting to find out if you got the job can make you anxious, try to be patient. Spend your time working on other job leads and keep moving forward while you’re waiting for a response. Know that sometimes applicants who are not selected, are not notified.
Summary

No matter where you are in your program of study – or if you’ve graduated – it is never too late to get started. Remember to:

☑ Write down your career goals and actions required to achieve them.

☑ Think about what aspect of your field interests you most and conduct informational interviews.

☑ Identify your soft-skills and work to improve the areas in which you are lacking or need improvement.

☑ Develop and grow your professional network and enlist the help of friends and family in your search.

☑ Create a solid résumé and cover letter that you can change and tweak as needed to target a specific job or company.

☑ Ensure your outgoing phone message and e-mail address are professional and appropriate.

☑ Utilize several different search methods to combine their rates of success.

☑ Stay focused and persistent with your job search, and keep track of all related activity. Never give up!

☑ Prepare yourself sufficiently for interviewing.

☑ Follow-up with hiring managers in a timely manner.

☑ Use your resources. In addition to the resources listed in this guide or those you may find elsewhere, don’t forget that you can also contact PTI Career Services for assistance.

☑ Start the process right now.
Sample Questions for Informational Interview

- Can you describe a typical day in your job?
- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
- How does the pace vary? Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?
- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your current position?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- What things did you do before you entered this occupation? Which have been most helpful? What other jobs can you get with the same background?
- How is the economy affecting this industry/your company?
- Why did you decide to work for this company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- Why do customers choose this company?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
Month XX, 2012

First & Last Name of Contact  
Contact’s Job Title  
Name of Company  
Mailing Address  
City, ST ZIP

Dear Mr./Ms. ______________:

Introduce yourself and tell them why you are contacting them. Be specific about what type of position you are seeking. If your letter is based on a referral, be sure to mention the name of the person who referred you. If you are responding to an advertised position, be sure to use the exact job title provided.

Explain your academic and professional qualifications. Use what you know about the company or job description to guide you and identify the qualities and skills you have that match what the employer needs. Remember, these qualities may not all be technical, and some could pertain to soft skills.

You should also describe any transferable skills you have that will translate well into the position you seek. Use specific details to describe how elements from your past experience and training will allow you to meet some of the requirements of the job. Explain what interests you about this particular job, or why you want to work for this particular company.

Invite them to contact you, and politely request an interview. There is no need to repeat your phone number and e-mail address since they should already be provided in the header.

Sincerely,

Signature

Typed First & Last Name
PROFESSIONAL PROFILE:
[Describe your career goal, relevant characteristics and how you are able to fulfill the employer’s needs. If they hire you, what kind of employee will they be getting?]

QUALIFICATIONS:
[List any certifications held and/or any information that identifies specific skills and qualifications that pertain to the job you’re seeking. What specific technical skills do you have? What are your soft skills? Use brief descriptive phrases instead of just one- or two-word descriptions.]

EDUCATION:
Name of School - City/State – Date of Completion
Program of Study
[List key accomplishments; describe what you learned/how you applied your knowledge]

EXPERIENCE:
[Name of Company/Location/Start-End Employment Dates]
[Position/Title]
[Write a brief statement that highlights duties, accomplishments and transferrable skills]

[Name of Company/Location/Start-End Employment Dates]
[Position/Title]
[Write a brief statement that highlights duties, accomplishments and transferrable skills]

[Name of Company/Location/Start-End Employment Dates]
[Position/Title]
[Write a brief statement that highlights duties, accomplishments and transferrable skills]
REFERENCES

1. [Reference's Name] [Title] [Company Name] [Street Address] [City, ST ZIP Code] [phone] [e-mail] [Relationship to you]

2. [Reference's Name] [Title] [Company Name] [Street Address] [City, ST ZIP Code] [phone] [e-mail] [Relationship to you]

3. [Reference's Name] [Title] [Company Name] [Street Address] [City, ST ZIP Code] [phone] [e-mail] [Relationship to you]

4. [Reference's Name] [Title] [Company Name] [Street Address] [City, ST ZIP Code] [phone] [e-mail] [Relationship to you]
Local Resources

ACTNOW
3 East G Street
Yakima, WA 98901
509-454-7989
actnowpersonnel.com

ADD Staffing
408 West Chestnut
Yakima, WA 98902
509-452-6556
addstaffingyakima.com

Express Employment Professionals
1021 South 40th Avenue
Yakima, WA 98908-3890
509-575-7770
expresspros.com

WorkSource
306 Division
Yakima, WA 98902
509-574-0105
cw1stop.org/yakima.htm
Federal Bonding Program

Provides fidelity bonds that guarantee honesty for “at-risk,” hard-to-place job seekers, including: ex-offenders, recovering substance abusers, welfare recipients and other persons having poor financial credit, economically disadvantaged youth and adults who lack a work history, individuals dishonorably discharged from the military, and others.

For more information about the program, please review the website bonds4jobs.com or contact the State bonding coordinator:

Shelley Warnock
Bonding Coordinator
WA Dept. of Employment Security
Offender Employment Services
P.O. Box 9046
Olympia, WA 98507
360-407-1373
swarnock@esd.wa.gov
Online Resources

Perry Tech Career Services Online  
www.perrytech.edu/students/careers.html  
Online tutorials and other career-related resources are available on the Career Services page of the Perry Tech website.

O*Net Online  
www.online.onetcenter.org  
Online database with comprehensive information on all types of careers.

Occupational Outlook Handbook  
http://www.bls.gov/ooh  
Career resource from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

WorkSource Job Search  
Search and apply for posted jobs throughout Washington State, and access additional career-related resources.

CareerBliss  
www.careerbliss.com  
Career community with resources dedicated to helping you find happiness in the workplace.

Official website for the book “What Color Is Your Parachute?”  
www.jobhuntersbible.com  
A good one-stop online resource with job search information and links to other helpful sites.

The Riley Guide  
rileyguide.com  
Online resource that provides free career and employment information.

Ask the Headhunter  
asktheheadhunter.com  
Column written by a headhunter with advice for job seekers and career changers.
Recommended Reading


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## Job Search Tracking Sheet

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42
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Job Search Tracking Sheet

Name of Business

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City, ST ZIP

Contact Name

Phone Number

E-mail

Researched Company online? ____________________________  Applied for job? ____________________________

Submitted Cover Letter and Resume? ____________________________  Emailed to inquire about future jobs? ____________________________

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