



# Strategies — for a — Successful Job Search

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# 10 Tips for good job hunting

In a job market where competition is fierce, it's already hard to find the right position. Trying to change careers can be even more challenging. AARP Work & Jobs is here to help with a variety of resources, like [aarp.org/work](https://aarp.org/work), with plenty of information on finding a job or creating a new business.

Follow these 10 tips to help you build a smart, strategic job search that can help you find the right job for you or make a successful transition to a new career.

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## **TIP #1** Make a skills inventory

Create a document with four columns. In the first column, make a list of all of your skills, including those learned on the job, acquired through volunteering or in school, and skills that are simply part of who you are. This will help you uncover skills you might otherwise overlook, either because you didn't use them in your previous work, or because you take them for granted.

## **TIP #2** Match your skills to outcomes

For each skill identified in your inventory, list in the second column how you have applied it. In the third column, list the results of applying that skill. For example, let's say one of your skills is project management. You could list "producing an event," for example, in the second column, and "came in under budget" in the third column. Now you have a document that defines you by a set of skills rather than just by your experience.

## **TIP #3** Identify jobs that need your skills

In the fourth column, identify jobs that require the skills you possess. This will help you identify roles that may interest you and where you can capitalize on your skills. The stronger the connection between your skills and potential jobs, the higher the chance you'll land an interview.

## **TIP #4** Create resumes based on your skills

Once you've identified jobs that match your skills, create multiple resumes aimed at those jobs, so each one you send is targeted to a specific opening.

- Include keywords or industry-specific terminology from the job description in each resume.
- Focus on your skills and accomplishments, how they have been applied and subsequent outcomes, rather than just a tally of your experience.
- Visit [aarp.org/resume](https://aarp.org/resume) for help creating resumes and cover letters.

#### **TIP #5 Network**

Use in-person and social media networks like **LinkedIn.com** to find people you know who can help you identify positions that match your skills.

#### **TIP #6 Practice for interviews**

In preparation for interviews, practice articulating your background as a set of skills. Rehearse how you will convey your personal brand to help you sell your talents and skills. (See “[The Art of the Interview](#),” page 40.)

#### **TIP #7 Dress to make a positive impression**

Consider buying a new interview suit or updating your hairstyle to ensure your appearance reflects someone who is ready to compete in today’s work environment.

#### **TIP #8 Learn something new or volunteer**

Reskill or upskill by taking a class or earning a certificate to learn a new skill or broaden your knowledge. Volunteering is also a great way to learn and to build your network. (See “[Reskilling and Upskilling](#),” page 45.)

#### **TIP #9 Manage your finances**

Reduce spending and monitor your cash flow if the job search takes longer than expected or if you think you might experience a salary cut when you change careers. If you’re unemployed, consider taking

part-time or freelance work to learn new skills, generate income and stay busy. Go to [aarp.org/work](http://aarp.org/work) for tips and resources.

#### **TIP #10 Exercise**

Stay active with your exercise of choice to stay fit and healthy and, importantly, to reduce stress.

### **The job search has changed and so can you**

If it’s been a while since your last job search, some aspects of the search and recruitment process have likely changed.

The new human resources manager is you. It’s up to you to identify hiring managers and present yourself to them as uniquely qualified for the job at hand.

Your job search will likely take place online. Recruiters use technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) to search resumes for keywords and screen candidate profiles and will likely correspond via email for status updates.

Expect hiring managers to be younger and well versed in the latest technology. Present yourself as tech-savvy. Have a professional email address (e.g., [Your Name]@gmail.com) and current, compelling profiles on **LinkedIn** and **X (formerly known as Twitter)** (see pages 10-17).

Also, check out [AARP Job Board](#) and connect with employers who value experience.

# **Take action!**

- Use the four-column process to inventory your skills and match them to jobs of interest.
- Network in person and online. Create a profile on **LinkedIn** to help you make use of current connections and develop new ones.
- Find resources at [aarp.org/work](http://aarp.org/work) for help with writing resumes, searching for jobs with employers who have committed to hiring experienced workers, and other resources to help in your transition to a new career.

# Skills inventory

Practice the four-column process for your own skills here:

| Skills | Application | Outcome | Jobs needing this skill |
|--------|-------------|---------|-------------------------|
|        |             |         |                         |

# Craft your personal brand

Your personal brand is composed of several things:

- **Skills and qualifications:** Your key talents and abilities and what you're good at
- **Achievements:** How you've made an impact
- **Passions:** What you love doing and how it's infused in your work
- **Value:** What you offer that an employer needs
- **Appearance:** How you dress and present yourself

Create an “**elevator speech**” (a quick summary of your personal brand) that you can use in all phases of your job search, including networking; your resume and cover letters; your profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook and X; and interviews. Your elevator speech answers the following questions:

- Who are you?
- What do you do best?
- How have you made an impact?
- What sets you apart from the competition?
- What are you seeking?

Use the space below to evolve your elevator speech. When you have a good one, memorize it! Practice it on willing friends and colleagues. Record yourself giving it. These steps may lead to further improvements.

**Draft 1:**

**Draft 2:**

**Draft 3:**

**Draft 4:**

# Examples of elevator speeches

## **Sales Representative**

I am a seasoned sales management professional with a wealth of industry experience and a history of exceeding sales goals. My clients and co-workers would describe me as reliable and dependable as illustrated by my long-term relationships and by consistently exceeding client expectations. My tenure with my previous employer speaks to my dedication, adaptability and client-service mindset.

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## **Accountant**

I'm not only a numbers person ... I'm also the solutions person. I have a proven track record of consistently meeting and exceeding performance goals. I am familiar with a variety of accounting specialties from my experience in the public and private sectors. My ability to work with a wide range of clients and industries has been a valuable resource to my employers. I work closely with managers and partners to help support our clients and identify new business opportunities. I am a self-starter with an eye for detail and pride myself on quality work.

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## **HR Associate**

I am passionate about building a world-class organization. I enjoy the challenge of integrating new systems and working with departments to ensure an improved workflow. I have received several performance awards for creating innovative talent management strategies that increased recruitment and retention of top performers. While I am proficient in the day-to-day administration of programs, I also have the ability to develop and implement long-term HR strategies.

# Get the most out of job boards

Job boards allow you to search jobs, access free information, and upload your resume for search by employers. Here are some excellent job boards. Many are available on mobile apps, giving you immediate access to the latest news and job announcements.

## **AARP Job Board**

The AARP Job Board is designed with the experienced worker in mind. Match your years of accomplishment with the needs of thousands of employers, many of whom have taken the AARP Employer Pledge to achieve an age-diverse workforce. You can also get Job Alerts about job openings of interest. ([aarp.org/jobs](http://aarp.org/jobs))

## **CareerBuilder**

CareerBuilder.com is one of the biggest online job boards, and its scope is international. Easy access to hot jobs via trending searches. ([careerbuilder.com](http://careerbuilder.com))

## **Dice**

Dice is an online job board that focuses on technology and engineering jobs. ([dice.com](http://dice.com))

## **Execu-Net**

Find job opportunities and networking for executive jobs in the \$100K employment market. Requires paid membership. ([execunet.com](http://execunet.com))

## **Glassdoor**

Glassdoor is a popular website and community for job seekers and serves as a platform to search for jobs, find salary information and read company reviews. ([glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com))

## **Google for Jobs**

Google for Jobs is a job search feature integrated into Google's search engine. It aggregates listings from various sources and displays them in search results. ([google.com](http://google.com))

## **LinkUp**

A job search aggregator, LinkUp only includes jobs listed on company websites, rather than other job boards or news listings. ([linkup.com](http://linkup.com))

## **Idealist**

Idealist provides a searchable database of job openings and volunteer opportunities in non-profit organizations. ([idealist.org](http://idealist.org))

## **Indeed**

Indeed is a Google-like search engine for jobs that aggregates information from job boards, news sites and company listings. ([indeed.com](http://indeed.com))

## **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is the largest professional social networking site where individuals can connect with other professionals and employers. ([linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com))

## **Monster**

One of the first online job boards, Monster.com includes listings in 50 countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia. ([monster.com](http://monster.com))

## **SimplyHired**

SimplyHired aggregates information from job boards, news sites and company listings. The job listings display a user's LinkedIn connections to each job. ([simplyhired.com](http://simplyhired.com))

## **Snagajob**

Snagajob is a job search engine website that focuses on hourly employment, including part-time and full-time work. ([snagajob.com](http://snagajob.com))

## **USAJobs**

USAJobs is the federal government's official site for jobs and employment information. ([usajobs.gov](http://usajobs.gov))

## **ZipRecruiter**

ZipRecruiter matches users' skills and objectives with the needs of employers. ([ziprecruiter.com](http://ziprecruiter.com))



# Build your networking strategy

Cultivate your personal network—neighbors, relatives, organizations, religious or community groups, book clubs or fellow volunteers. Look to all generations for networking opportunities.

Write down the names of current and former colleagues, acquaintances from professional organizations, and the business associates of family and friends. Many companies count on employee referrals as a major source of new hires.

| Current employer | Past employer | Relatives | Neighbors | Friends |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Name:            | Name:         | Name:     | Name:     | Name:   |
| Email:           | Email:        | Email:    | Email:    | Email:  |
| Phone:           | Phone:        | Phone:    | Phone:    | Phone:  |
| Name:            | Name:         | Name:     | Name:     | Name:   |
| Email:           | Email:        | Email:    | Email:    | Email:  |
| Phone:           | Phone:        | Phone:    | Phone:    | Phone:  |
| Name:            | Name:         | Name:     | Name:     | Name:   |
| Email:           | Email:        | Email:    | Email:    | Email:  |
| Phone:           | Phone:        | Phone:    | Phone:    | Phone:  |

| Religious organizations | Community groups | Hobbies/sports | Gym/fitness club | Companies for social media |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Name:                   | Name:            | Name:          | Name:            | Name:                      |
| Email:                  | Email:           | Email:         | Email:           | Email:                     |
| Phone:                  | Phone:           | Phone:         | Phone:           | Phone:                     |
| Name:                   | Name:            | Name:          | Name:            | Name:                      |
| Email:                  | Email:           | Email:         | Email:           | Email:                     |
| Phone:                  | Phone:           | Phone:         | Phone:           | Phone:                     |
| Name:                   | Name:            | Name:          | Name:            | Name:                      |
| Email:                  | Email:           | Email:         | Email:           | Email:                     |
| Phone:                  | Phone:           | Phone:         | Phone:           | Phone:                     |

# Networking on social media

The job interview is just the tip of a huge iceberg. Before you get there, you should create a presence online and a network of contacts in your field.

## Embrace social media

Using platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook and X to connect by following accounts, joining groups and sharing content can help to build relationships and potential career opportunities.

## Learn how to use hashtags, keywords and trends

These are the threads that connect people on social media. They are common to LinkedIn, Facebook and X alike, although they are used in slightly different ways in each (see “Culture Alert” below).

A keyword is a word you use (in your home page or in posts) so others will notice and perhaps link to you. It’s also a word you can search for to find like-minded people or connections, or maybe even employers.

Use keywords to attract employers and contacts. Think like an employer: what are the key terms employers and recruiters are looking for in your field? Look at other people who do what you do or want to do. What keywords are they using? Let’s say you’re a biologist who studies viruses. OK, use “virology” in your bio and in posts. If you’re reposting an article about Bitcoin, perhaps you’ll use cryptocurrency or blockchain in your posts. Companies or recruiters searching for those terms might find what you’re posting.

A hashtag is a word or short phrase (no spaces or punctuation) preceded by a hashtag, as in #hotdoglovers. You can search for almost anything by typing a hashtag into the Search feature.

Hashtags bring people together who are interested in the same topic, event, theme or conversation. People interested in hot dogs are searching X every day for more on their passion. If you post a tweet about hot dogs and put #hotdoglovers in your tweet, these folks will find you. The same may happen if you tweet about jewelry on Etsy and use #etsyjewelry, or if you’re a hydrogeologist and post about #soilmoisture.

Similarly, a job seeker could search LinkedIn for #techjobs or #educationjobs to find opportunities.

Trends help you see who’s talking about what. X and other search engines track the popularity of hashtags and keywords, effectively giving you a picture of the conversation in your target company, in your field, and among your contacts. Use trends to see what’s hot, what’s wanted, and who’s shopping.

**Culture Alert:** These three media use hashtags and keywords somewhat differently. In the LinkedIn world, they tend to be strictly businesslike, topic-related, and sparing. On Facebook and X, they are full of freewheeling attitude. Since you’re searching for a job, you’ll want to stay on the LinkedIn side of things in all three media. Use hashtags sparingly, but make sure they relate closely to the topic at hand, show you’re smart and passionate about your field, and lead readers to more good stuff.

## Consider creating a personal website

This is a very common way to put you and your brand out there. DIY platforms such as Squarespace and WordPress exist online to help you make an attractive, beckoning site, including photo, bio, resume, publications list, and so on. Such personal sites are increasingly a given in the professional world. Your personal website is your information hub, where anyone interested in your skills and background can learn more. It's the mega-antenna radiating your brand to the world.

# LinkedIn

## Harness the power of LinkedIn in your job search

LinkedIn is a social medium for the business world—by far the biggest. It helps job seekers in at least three powerful ways. They include:

**Your LinkedIn profile.** This amounts to a full resume open to employee searches by thousands of companies. In fact, 87% of recruiters look at job seekers' LinkedIn profiles. So put time and effort into writing and setting up your profile, and edit it frequently so it stays up to date.

**The greatest business networking site in the world.** As of 2024, LinkedIn has over 1 billion users, posting profiles, news or jobs; looking for jobs; and looking for job seekers. Take advantage:

- *Network* with other people in your field and also with companies in which you're interested.
- *Connect* with former colleagues, employers or classmates—you never know where a good recommendation letter might come from!
- *Look up* people who have jobs you'd like to have. Peruse their skills and backgrounds.
- *Follow* thought leaders in your field.
- If you get a job interview, learn about your interviewers by looking them up on LinkedIn. Do this with care: it's more or less expected, but be respectful.

**A huge virtual job market.** Search for jobs posted on LinkedIn. Set up a *LinkedIn Job Alert* to let you know when a job comes up that matches the search criteria you create in your profile.

# Your LinkedIn profile: Your personal brand for all to see

Your LinkedIn profile is the basis of your personal brand on LinkedIn. It's how prospective employers and contacts first meet you and get to know you. Don't waste this opportunity; put time and effort into creating a truly polished profile—and shaping it as you and your job trajectory change. You want to be found, so make it easy for recruiters and businesses to find you. Fill in as much of your profile as you can. LinkedIn's algorithm places those who have the most complete profiles highest up in search engine results. Here are some of the elements of a good profile:

- **Headshot:** A current, professional head-to-shoulders shot of a smiling you in formal business attire. Show your eyes and teeth. Refresh your headshot whenever your look changes.
- **Background image:** Should be attractive, memorable, expressive and yet professional.
- **Headline:** Make your headline stand out: The headline is the first line readers will see on your profile and influences someone's first impression of you. Highlight your unique value and skills with these tips.
- **Summary:** This is the text box (2,600-character limit) underneath your picture and headline. Work on it. Polish it. Make it sing. It's a full-on pitch for your brand. It should *not* be a list of former jobs or a mere litany of achievements. It *should* be your story in a nutshell, written with passion, flare, and a dash of attitude. Write it to attract interest and show who you are. In fact, *this would be a great place for your Elevator Speech.*
- **Contact info:** Edit the ways you want to be contacted (email, phone, website).
- **“Open To” button:** Click on *Finding a new job*. This will take you to a box in which you'll choose the work you want, the location, and who can see this information (everyone on LinkedIn or only recruiters). It will even offer to send out a post to all of LinkedIn to announce you're looking for work.
- **Add profile section:** Click on this button and a drop-down menu invites you to consider the following add-ons. Your selections will appear in boxes beneath your profile. Do you need all of them? No, but do the ones most relevant to your job search.
  - *Intro:* Which you've already done if you've followed the advice above.
  - *About:* Your Summary, which you've already done.
  - *Featured:* Post some of your best work here—one or two recent high points, including posts, articles, links, or media. Edit this frequently.
  - *Background:* Add or edit information about work experience, education, licenses & education, and volunteer experience.
  - *Skills:* This will open a box in which you can either enter your skills by yourself or click on ones LinkedIn suggests based on your profile. Either way, this instantly fortifies your profile by showing the world what you have done and can do.
  - *Accomplishments:* Publications, patents, courses, projects, awards, test scores, languages, organizations you belong to.
  - *Additional Information:* Helps you ask someone on LinkedIn for a recommendation.
  - *Supported Languages:* This allows you to add a profile in another language.

Any of these elements could attract an employer's interest. Editing and refreshing them periodically makes your profile a living, breathing thing. And it's a powerful way to get your brand out there.

There are also boxes showing your Dashboard (statistics on who has viewed your profile and how many searches you've been in), Activity (recent LinkedIn posts), Experience, Education, Skills & Endorsements (when

other LinkedIn members highlight your achievements in specific skills), Recommendations (other LinkedIn members writing brief, personal appreciations of what's special about you), Accomplishments, and Interests. Keep adding features.

## LinkedIn as a networking powerhouse

You want to connect with the companies, organizations and people who can put you in a good position to find a job. Whom should you connect with?

- Companies you're interested in. Make a list and follow them all on LinkedIn.
- People working in your field, especially people who have jobs you'd like to have. Peruse their skills and backgrounds.
- Clients and colleagues. Ask for recommendations from clients and colleagues as well as provide recommendations to help build your profile and network with others.
- Alumni/ae from your school. Your school appears to the right of your profile picture. Click on it. That brings you to your education section where you can see fellow alumni. There, you can search for people who attended your school, and find the ones who work in your field. Add them to your network. Reach out and ask them thoughtful questions about their jobs and company culture.
- Thought leaders in your field.
- Professional organizations to show you're active and passionate about your field.

Sync your profile with your email address book. That brings all your contacts from, say, Gmail over into LinkedIn. It's a good way to get started.

Personalize your URL. LinkedIn gives you an automatic URL (your LinkedIn email address) with numbers and dashes that may be hard for people to remember, like [www.linkedin.com/in/yourname-77492589](http://www.linkedin.com/in/yourname-77492589). Simplify and personalize it: [www.linkedin.com/in/yourname](http://www.linkedin.com/in/yourname). Click the *Me* icon at the top right-hand corner of your LinkedIn page. That will whisk you to a page at which you will click on *Edit Public profile & URL*. That takes you to a page with your URL on it. Click on the *pencil*, edit the URL, and Save. Now it's all your own.

## How do you find everything? Searching and connecting on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is such a big place that it may be intimidating at first. But you have powerful search tools at your fingertips to find the right company, group, post or person. That's why it's crucial to master.

### Search techniques on LinkedIn

Every LinkedIn page has a Search field at the top with a magnifying glass. It is your friend. Enter a word or phrase in the Search field. LinkedIn will type ahead of you, predicting search terms that arise from what you've typed. They'll appear in a drop-down menu. Select one of the suggestions and click. You'll be redirected to your selection. Or you could see more results by clicking the Search icon (magnifying glass) or by clicking *See all results*.

That *See all results* page is really powerful. It offers you a range of options to narrow and focus your search. You can filter your search by clicking tabs for *Jobs*, *People*, *Companies* (pages for organizations and businesses), *Posts*, *Groups*, *Schools*, *Events*, and *Courses*. The most frequently used filters appear at the top of your Search Results

page. Even more advanced filters appear if you click on the *All Filters* section. They'll come in handy when your job search gets more advanced (see below).

Be active. LinkedIn is a social medium, so be social; it could help get you a job. Write thoughtful posts about the news and trends in your field and post them. Use relevant hashtags (see above) and provide links if interested readers want to learn more. What you post gets your brand out there, your personality and sensibility. It may also attract employers to get a fuller sense of you. Take part in relevant Professional Groups. Avoid overtly political or partisan posts: your job search is the point here. Post relevant content, with thoughtful comment. Post and repost plenty of industry-related content, things that you like or find thought-provoking about the field you want to have a job in. Give a sense of your grasp of the issues. Build your brand.

Be interactive. Check in to your LinkedIn a few times a day to read posts and see who's saying what. When executives, business contacts, or thought leaders post an opinion, a publication (their own or one they like), or when they announce an accomplishment, write a comment. Make it thoughtful, smart, a token of the real you. They—and others in the network—will read and appreciate it.

### **Getting to the jobs**

If you navigate LinkedIn with confidence and attention, you will at length have a network of institutions and people, many of whom you've contacted with questions and comments. So how do you and the job get together?

- A company or recruiter reads your profile and reaches out for more information or to schedule an interview.
- You see a job post at a company or recruiter's page, or at a professional organization's page. From there, you can follow appropriate steps to send in your resume or apply for the job.
- Or it may arise through your interactivity. Make a list of your target company(ies). In Advanced Search, find out which of your contacts is associated with them. (Try LinkedIn Alumni: this seems to have a high rate of success.) Reach out to them. If they are employees, ask questions about the company culture. If they are clients or service providers, ask what it's like to do business with them. When you feel ready to do so, you may ask one of these contacts for an introduction to someone in the company.

People on LinkedIn have gotten jobs based on their posts, or on a publication, on a combination of skills (Petrochemical Engineering and Chinese; AI and Podcasting, etc.), or on a Recommendation or Endorsement (which is why you should ask friends, associates, and other contacts for them!). The more skills and accomplishments you put out there, and the bigger your network, the better chance you have for LinkedIn success.

# Facebook

## Using Facebook in your job search

More than 200 million businesses are on Facebook in some way. Many sell things there. Many have company websites, often several of them. And many list jobs.

### **A few preliminary Facebook do's:**

Clean up your Facebook. Even if you don't use Facebook for the job search itself, if you get an interview, it is likely your prospective employer will peruse your Facebook and X presence to get a sense of you. If there's stuff you wouldn't want them to see, hide or delete it. You can either do this yourself or hire a reputation management company to Hoover your Facebook for you. You can also create a close-friends-only Facebook page apart from the one you will use for your job search.

Have a good, professional profile photo and background image.

In the *About* section, make sure your background information and work history are accurate and complete, tailored to the jobs you're after. You want your *Work Experience* as current, detailed, and error-free as you can make it (see "Applying for a Job").

Post relevant content, with thoughtful comment. Build your brand!

Build a Facebook network. Follow work colleagues, companies you admire or aspire to, people who have jobs you'd like to have, and thought leaders in your field. If a company makes a big announcement—an expansion, let's say—reshare it, accompanied by an approving comment. If thought leaders or colleagues in the field post smart things or publish smart articles, reshare them and say so. Occasionally and thoughtfully, use Facebook Messenger to thank people for their smart and needful work, or to ask questions about their work or about industry trends.

Join industry groups. There are millions of group pages on Facebook. About 60 million are dedicated business-oriented pages. When you sign into your Facebook profile, go to the Explore section and scroll down to Groups. That can help you find a group for your target industry. Join in on events and discussions.

Be interactive. If contacts follow you back, always thank them via Messenger. If they engage in dialogue, join in respectfully and thoughtfully.

Follow company pages and industry pages. Become a part of the network. If a company or industry page hosts live webinars, attend and post comments. Show you know your stuff.

# X (Formerly known as Twitter)

## Job searching on X

X can be a useful, even powerful tool in your job search. You'll be doing much that's similar to your activities on Facebook and LinkedIn—but remember, redundancy is good! The more connections you have, the bigger your network and your access to job opportunities.

**Set up your profile.** It's much the same as on LinkedIn or Facebook:

- *Profile picture.* Nice, professional picture and background image.
- *Bio.* You have 160 characters to give a snapshot of who you are, with a personal touch: *Marketing coordinator living in New York. Likes New York Rangers & hiking.*
- *Provide links to your personal website and LinkedIn page.* Those will lead prospective employers to more information about you.

**Build your network.** X—like all networking—is about following and being followed. You follow companies and people using the Search feature, entering the company's name (*General Mills*, let's say) and clicking. That takes you to the company's X account, where you click *Follow*. Boom: you will now receive everything General Mills posts. Follow your target companies, people with jobs like the one you'd like to have, friends, colleagues, and alumni/ae in the field, thought leaders, and leading publications.

**Be interactive.** X is not a one-way follow-fest! Now that you're following companies and people, interact with what they're posting.

- If you read a company announcement, a colleague's insightful post, or a thought leader's thought-provoking publication, *retweet it* with a few words of appreciation.
- When you retweet something, be sure to include hashtags relevant to the discussion. If you put the hashtag #poodles in a post, everyone scouring X for stuff on poodles will find your retweet. Same for #engineering or #pharmasales or #tabletops.
- If someone you're following says something really smart or essential, tell him or her so via *Direct Message*. Do this thoughtfully; "stalkers" aren't welcome.
- Search for and join X Chats in your field. These are scheduled, recurring conversations hosted by the same accounts, occurring at the same time, and designated by their own hashtags. People learn when the chats will be, join using the hashtag and participate when questions are asked. Look for chats in your field—and even consider hosting one to gain followers and be a part.



**Finding out about jobs.** Use search to discover opportunities.

- Type @XHiring or go directly to x.com/jobs. You can search by job type, company and location.
- You can also filter to narrow job results by location type (onsite, remote, hybrid), seniority, employment type (full-time, part-time, contract) and company name.
- Many companies run a separate account just for job opportunities. Verizon runs Verizon Careers at @VerizonCareers. Google has a robust feed at @lifeatgoogle. Find target companies that do this and follow their jobs accounts.
- Both companies and recruiters who work for them may post job openings on X. Do some research and see which industry recruiters you should follow.

Any of these techniques may lead you to a job you'd like to apply for. From there, you'll know what to do!

# Track your networking activity and progress

|                       |       |        |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|
| Date:                 | Name: | Phone: |
| Company/Organization: |       | Email: |
| Outcome:              |       |        |
| Next Steps:           |       |        |
| Date:                 | Name: | Phone: |
| Company/Organization: |       | Email: |
| Outcome:              |       |        |
| Next Steps:           |       |        |
| Date:                 | Name: | Phone: |
| Company/Organization: |       | Email: |
| Outcome:              |       |        |
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| Date:                 | Name: | Phone: |
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| Outcome:              |       |        |
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| Outcome:              |       |        |
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| Date:                 | Name: | Phone: |
| Company/Organization: |       | Email: |
| Outcome:              |       |        |
| Next Steps:           |       |        |
| Date:                 | Name: | Phone: |
| Company/Organization: |       | Email: |
| Outcome:              |       |        |
| Next Steps:           |       |        |

# AARP resume kit

## Write a winning resume

To capture attention, a well-written resume is central to your job search. Your resume needs to convey your personal brand—the combination of skills, achievements and abilities that show your unique value to an employer.

AARP is here to help with a variety of resources. Visit [aarp.org/resume](https://aarp.org/resume) for tips on how to write a winning resume. And at AARP Work & Jobs ([aarp.org/work](https://aarp.org/work)), there's wide-ranging content for job seekers, including tips on navigating the job market, finding career opportunities, dealing with tough interview questions and more.

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*There are three basic resume styles. No matter which one you choose, some elements always hold true. For example, your resume should:*

- Be free of grammatical errors and typos.
- Be no longer than two pages.
- Use a simple black font. Ten- to 12-point font is usually considered acceptable.

### Every resume should include:

- Relevant keywords to both your industry of focus and the job you are applying for.
- Contact information: your name, phone number, email address and LinkedIn profile URL.
- A brief statement of your key experiences and strengths.
- Relevant work experience.
- Skills, areas of expertise and specific accomplishments.
- Education, training and certifications.
- Awards, professional memberships and volunteer work—if relevant to the job.

### A winning resume focuses on:

- Your most recent relevant jobs—within the last 15 years.
- Skills and experience that are most relevant to the job you're applying for. Include computer and IT skills.
- Transferable skills from both work and non-work settings (such as volunteering). This is especially important if you're changing careers.
- Accomplishments—not job duties.
- Results and outcomes. Quantify your achievements and use action verbs. For example, "increased sales by 40 percent," "expanded program" or "exceeded targets."

### Elements to leave out of your resume:

- Dates of education.
- Early job history.
- Dates of experience beyond 15 years ago. Say "five years" instead of "2010–2015."
- Personal information, such as age, height, race, religion or health status.
- Hobbies or personal interests unless they are truly relevant to the job.

## Keywords—the key to success

Keywords are industry-specific terms used by employers to describe the key responsibilities of a position. For example, sales may have a different name in different industries (e.g., marketing, business development or account management). Look at the specific job posting for keywords to use in your resume.

- Use them when referring to job titles, accomplishments, experience, skills, education, career objectives and training.
- Use exact keywords and language for online resumes to make sure your resume gets through the electronic applicant tracking system.
- You can also use tools like JobScan ([jobscan.co](http://jobscan.co)), which uses AI to compare your resume to the job description and help optimize against the skills and experience recruiters are looking for.

## Resume styles

You can choose from three basic resume styles: chronological, functional or a combination resume. Examples of all three types of resume styles are included here.

### Chronological

A chronological resume works well if you have had steady employment in an industry or field and want to remain in the field.

- List your recent work experience in reverse chronological order. Start with your most recent job and go back no more than 15 years. List job titles, employers and dates of employment (in years only). Ideally, your history will show an increasing scope of work and accomplishments.
- Under each job, state your key accomplishments as bullet points. Use action verbs to briefly describe what you did. Then give the results or the impact of your actions, using numbers when possible. Show the challenges you faced, the actions you took and the results. For example: “Planned and supervised five community events that raised over \$75,000 for the Springfield Homeless Shelter, helping the center stay open despite funding cuts.”

### Functional

A functional resume is organized by skills and expertise. Recruiters and employers think logically, and so they tend to see chronological resumes as the most logical. Functional resumes should be regarded as a last resort, only for a few special circumstances: when you have changed jobs frequently, let's say, or when you have only limited related experience, or large gaps in employment. In such cases, it may make sense to stress transferable skills that carry over from one field to another.

Before you start, identify your main skill areas (functional areas). A list at the end of this kit has examples. Write down all your major skills, even though you won't use them all on every resume. This includes skills gained in non-work settings, such as volunteering, hobbies or caregiving.

- For each job you apply for, choose skill areas that are the best match. List your most relevant skills first.
- Include applicable skills that transfer from one field to another. This is important if you are switching jobs or industries. For example, if you were a teacher and now want to be a corporate trainer, you might choose facilitating, training needs assessment, curriculum development and public speaking as skill areas.
- List your skill areas, and include bullet points of related accomplishments under each. For an outreach job with your local senior center, you could choose “community organizing” as one of your functional areas. An accomplishment might be: “Initiated a neighborhood watch program covering a seven-block area. Recruited over 50 volunteers, scheduled shifts and publicized the effort. Crime dropped over 20 percent in the first six months.”
- Following the list of skill areas and accomplishments, include a brief job history, listing employer name, position held and dates (by year).

### Hybrid

A hybrid resume allows you to organize your resume by skills as in a functional resume, but also include a chronological list of key positions. Likewise, you could list jobs chronologically, and then include main functional (skill) areas as you would in a functional resume.

## Tips for success

Whichever type of resume you use, some common guidelines apply:

- Tailor your resume for each job application.
- Use keywords: Speak the employer's language by using all relevant keywords from the job posting to show that your skills are a good match.
- Always cite dates of employment. Employers tend to dislike resumes that give few or no dates, which is a risk in a functional resume.
- Stress your actual accomplishments, not job duties or character traits. For example, instead of just saying you are a team player, describe something you accomplished on the job by using your team skills.
- When sending an online resume, pay attention to requirements. For example, some sites may accept only a chronological format.

## To refresh your resume, point to accomplishments

If you're not getting results from your resume, it could be more than a poor job market. You've had years of experience and a stellar job record. So why don't employers look at your resume and want to hire you on the spot?

The answer may lie in one word: *accomplishments*. The key to writing accomplishments is to focus on results. Your resume can be loaded with details about your previous jobs, but without compelling accomplishments, it will blend in with hundreds like it.

### What is an accomplishment?

Accomplishments are different from your abilities, duties or strengths. Abilities are what you can do, duties are what you have done and strengths are what you do well. Accomplishments, on the other hand, show:

- The specific actions you have taken in a particular situation.
- The skills and abilities you used to meet a challenge.
- The results or outcomes you achieved.

The following example is a job responsibility, not an accomplishment: "Wrote grant proposals to numerous funding sources to support program." To turn this into an accomplishment, show the results and benefits: "Wrote three successful grant applications to private foundations, resulting in funding to serve an additional 100 clients."

### Write down your accomplishments

Before you start writing your resume, draw up a list of accomplishments. You won't use the same ones in every resume, so you'll have some in reserve for different types of positions. Don't forget that your volunteer work and education can also be counted as accomplishments—as long as they are related to the job you want.

To jog your memory about your accomplishments, ask yourself these questions, and think about how your accomplishments had impact.

Ask yourself: Have I ...

- Accomplished more with the same or fewer resources?
- Received awards or special recognition?
- Increased efficiency?
- Accomplished something for the first time?
- Prepared original papers, reports or articles?
- Managed a work group or department?
- Managed a budget?
- Identified problems others didn't see?
- Developed a new system or procedure?
- Been promoted or received additional responsibility?

## Summarize your accomplishments

Try the *Challenge-Action-Results* approach.

For each accomplishment, write down the answers to the following questions:

**The CHALLENGE:** What was the problem, need or situation?

**The ACTION(S):** What did you do about it? Be specific. You can also include any obstacles you overcame, and the skills you demonstrated.

**The RESULTS:** What results did you produce? Quantify the results (use numbers!).

After answering the questions above, summarize your answers in an accomplishment statement to include in your resume.

## How to measure your accomplishments

- Use numbers whenever you can—money saved, decreased costs, achieving more with less. The best numbers are in dollars.
- If it's not possible to give a dollar amount, use other measures. Examples: number of people affected, amount of time saved, percentage of increase in subscriptions or traffic, percentage of reduction in customer complaints or similar measures.
- If you can't quantify, use words like "significantly" or "substantially"—as long as this is true, of course.

## Examples of accomplishments

For a job in customer relations:

- *Developed communication strategy to respond to customers regarding a new 150-item product list, resulting in a 20 percent decrease in returned orders.*

For a job managing computer operations:

- *Initiated and implemented a strategy for consolidating computer operations from three centers to two, saving \$200,000 without interrupting processing.*

For an outreach job with your local senior center:

- *Initiated a neighborhood watch program covering a seven-block area. Recruited over 50 volunteers, scheduled shifts, and publicized the effort. Crime dropped over 20 percent in the first six months.*

For a job as a professional storyteller:

- *Presented 10 storytelling workshops for grade levels K–6 at county schools and public libraries. Trained over 100 after-school group leaders on how to start a storytelling program, resulting in self-sustaining programs at five locations.*

## What is not an accomplishment

Accomplishments are specific; they state concrete actions and results. The following kinds of information are not accomplishments, and it's best to avoid them:

- Your job description. Eliminate the phrase "duties included" from your resume. Instead, translate your job duties into specific accomplishments.
- The number of years you worked, or good attendance. Instead of how long you worked, focus on what you accomplished. It's your list of achievements that will demonstrate your future value to the employer.
- Soft skills, such as "team player," "good communicator" and "detail-oriented." As good as it is to have these traits, leave them out of your resume. Instead, cite accomplishments that show you have these qualities.
- Vague statements about your career objective. Omit fuzzy language such as, "Seeking to use my broad range of skills in a challenging position."

## Accomplishments = Results

Knowing your accomplishments has many advantages. You'll be able to:

- Seek out the jobs that fit you best.
- Highlight "transferable skills" that apply to different kinds of jobs.
- Tailor your resume to the specific job.
- Improve your networking pitch.
- Write a more focused resume.

# Sample chronological resume

---

## Linda Jones

Phone Number

Email Address

Linkedin profile URL

### SKILLS SUMMARY

- Management: Skilled manager with wide experience in all areas of food service, including daily operations, marketing and development, staff training and workplace health and safety.
- Financial: Excellent track record of maintaining low overhead, increasing sales and generating high-dollar profits.
- Customer relations: Proven skills in developing innovative ways to improve service and build customer loyalty.

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### General Manager, Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK (2022–Present)

Directed start-up of successful health-oriented restaurant. Manage, train and schedule 24 employees for 100-seat restaurant, including cook and wait staff. Manage menu development, purchasing, marketing and customer relations.

- Maintain low overtime and turnover; staff retention rate is 40 percent above industry standard.
- Developed marketing campaign to promote new lunch menu, resulting in a doubling of midday traffic within two months.
- Initiated customer opinion cards and implemented “coffee with the manager” to solicit feedback and build customer loyalty.
- Broke even after second year of café’s operation; exceeded previous year’s profits by 28 percent.

#### Store Manager, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City, OK (2016–2022)

Successfully completed company’s management training program and trained 35 cooks, dish area employees and wait staff. Supervised daily operations at two high-volume stores, each generating over \$1 million in profits annually.

- Accomplished 5 percent reduction in labor costs through better selection and training of staff.
- Enhanced and implemented employee safety procedures, lowering on-the-job injuries by 26 percent.
- Prepared annual budget for the location, a site consistently among the five most profitable restaurants in the company.

#### Sales/Service Representative, Good Cuppa Joe Inc., Boulder, CO (2010–2016)

Cultivated South Denver and mountain community markets selling espresso equipment, supplies and coffee to wide variety of hospitality outlets, including restaurants, coffee houses, hospitals and hotels. Trained restaurant sales staff in operating, marketing and merchandising coffee products.

- Led company in sales of leased equipment and supplies; exceeded gross margin profits by 34 percent.

- Developed and controlled 50 percent of market share in two key regions.
- Implemented a new “30-day trial program” resulting in 30 percent more placements.

## **RELATED EXPERIENCE**

### **Volunteer Community Liaison, Regional Food Pantry, Oriole, OK (2012–Present)**

- Coordinate pickups of surplus food from local merchants; develop sample recipes for recipients; advise food pantry volunteers on food safety and handling.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Bachelor of Science, Marketing and Management, Pitcairn University, Denver
- Trained in Restaurant Industry Systems and Remancon Systems.
- Restaurant Management Training, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City
- Completed courses in Microsoft Office Excel, Word, PowerPoint.

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- National Restaurant Association
- McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce
- Oklahoma Restaurant Association



# Sample functional resume

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## Linda Jones

Phone Number

Email Address

Linkedin profile URL

### SKILLS SUMMARY

- Skilled manager with wide experience in all areas of food service including daily operations, marketing and development, staff training, and workplace health and safety.
- Excellent track record of maintaining low overhead, increasing sales and generating high-dollar profits.
- Proven skills in developing innovative ways to improve service and build customer loyalty.

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### Food Service Management

Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK

- Directed start-up of successful, health-oriented restaurant. Manage staffing, purchasing, marketing, menu development and customer relations.
- Broke even after second year of café's operation; exceeded previous year's profits by 28 percent.

The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City, OK

- Supervised daily operations at two high-volume stores, each generating over \$1 million in profits annually.
- Prepared annual budget for the location, a site consistently among the five most profitable restaurants in the company.

#### Staff Training and Supervision

Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK

- Manage, train and schedule 24 employees for 100-seat restaurant, including cook and wait staff.
- Maintain low overtime and turnover; retention rate 40 percent above industry standards.

The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City, OK

- Trained 35 cooks, dish area employees and wait staff. Accomplished a 5 percent reduction in labor costs through better selection and training of staff.
- Enhanced and implemented employee safety procedures, which lowered on-the-job injuries by 26 percent.

Good Cuppa Joe Inc., Boulder, CO

- Trained restaurant sales staff in operating, marketing and merchandising coffee products.

**Customer Care**

Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK

- Initiated customer opinion cards and implemented “coffee with the manager” to solicit feedback and build customer loyalty.
- Developed marketing campaign to promote new lunch menu, resulting in a doubling of mid-day traffic within two months.

**Sales and Marketing**

Good Cuppa Joe, Inc., Boulder, CO

- Developed and controlled 50 percent of the market share in two key regions selling espresso equipment, supplies and coffee to restaurants, coffee houses, hospitals and hotels.
- Led company in sales of leased equipment and supplies; exceeded gross margin profits by 34 percent.
- Implemented a new “30-day trial program” that resulted in 30 percent more placements.

**WORK HISTORY**

- General Manager, Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK, 2022–Present
- Store Manager, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City, 2016–2022
- Sales/Service Representative, Good Cuppa Joe, Inc., Boulder, 2010–2016

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Bachelor of Science, Marketing and Management, Pitcairn University, Denver
- Trained in Restaurant Industry Systems and Remancon Systems
- Restaurant Management Training, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City
- Completed courses in Microsoft Office Excel, Word, PowerPoint

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**

- Volunteer Community Liaison, Regional Food Pantry, Oriole, OK (2012–Present). Coordinate pickups of surplus food from local merchants; develop sample recipes for recipients; advise food pantry volunteers on food safety and handling.

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- National Restaurant Association
- McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce
- Oklahoma Restaurant Association

# Sample hybrid resume

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## Linda Jones

Phone Number

Email Address

Linkedin profile URL

### SKILLS SUMMARY

- Management: Skilled manager with wide experience in all areas of food service including daily operations, marketing and development, staff training and workplace health and safety.
- Financial: Excellent track record of maintaining low overhead, increasing sales, and generating high-dollar profits.
- Customer relations: Proven skills in developing innovative ways to improve service and build customer loyalty.

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### General Manager, Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK (November 2022–Present)

##### Food Service Management

- Directed start-up of successful, health-oriented restaurant. Manage staffing, purchasing, marketing, menu development and customer relations.
- Broke even after second year of café's operation; exceeded previous year's profits by 28 percent.

##### Staff Training and Supervision

- Manage, train and schedule 24 employees for 100-seat restaurant, including cook and wait staff.
- Maintain low overtime and turnover; retention rate 40 percent above industry standards.

##### Customer Care

- Initiated customer opinion cards and implemented "coffee with the manager" to solicit feedback and build customer loyalty.
- Developed marketing campaign to promote new lunch menu, resulting in a doubling of mid-day traffic within two months.

#### Store Manager, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City, OK (June 2016–October 2022)

##### Food Service Management

- Supervised daily operations at two high-volume stores, each generating over \$1 million in profits annually.
- Prepared annual budget for the location, a site consistently among the five most profitable restaurants in the company.

##### Staff Training and Supervision

- Trained 35 cooks, dish area employees and wait staff. Accomplished a 5 percent reduction in labor costs through better selection and training of staff.

- Enhanced and implemented employee safety procedures, which lowered on-the-job injuries by 26 percent.

**Sales/Service Representative, Good Cuppa Joe Inc., Boulder, CO (2010–2016)**

**Sales and Marketing**

- Developed and controlled 50 percent of the market share in two key regions selling espresso equipment, supplies and coffee to restaurants, coffee houses, hospitals and hotels.
- Led company in sales of leased equipment and supplies; exceeded gross margin profits by 34 percent.
- Implemented a new “30-day trial program” that resulted in 30 percent more placements.

**Staff Training and Supervision**

- Trained restaurant sales staff in operating, marketing and merchandising coffee products.
- Accomplished 5 percent reduction in labor costs through better selection and training of staff.
- Enhanced and implemented employee safety procedures, which lowered on-the-job injuries by 26 percent.
- Prepared annual budget for the location, a site consistently among the five most profitable restaurants in the company.

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**

- Volunteer Community Liaison, Regional Food Pantry, Oriole, OK (2012–Present). Coordinate pickups of surplus food from local merchants; develop sample recipes for recipients; advise food pantry volunteers on food safety and handling.

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Bachelor of Science, Marketing and Management, Pitcairn University, Denver
- Trained in Restaurant Industry Systems and Remancon Systems
- Restaurant Management Training, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City
- Completed courses in Microsoft Office Excel, Word, PowerPoint

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- National Restaurant Association
- McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce
- Oklahoma Restaurant Association

# Action verbs for resumes

Use some of these action verbs in your job resume and cover letter to describe your skills and experiences.

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|                |              |             |             |              |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Accelerated    | Created      | Guided      | Operated    | Sold         |
| Accomplished   | Defined      | Handled     | Ordered     | Solved       |
| Adapted        | Delegated    | Hired       | Organized   | Sparked      |
| Adjusted       | Demonstrated | Identified  | Packed      | Specified    |
| Administered   | Deposited    | Illustrated | Persuaded   | Staffed      |
| Advertised     | Designed     | Implemented | Pioneered   | Stimulated   |
| Advised        | Developed    | Improved    | Planned     | Streamlined  |
| Analyzed       | Devised      | Improvised  | Prepared    | Strengthened |
| Announced      | Directed     | Indexed     | Presented   | Stretched    |
| Arranged       | Distributed  | Influenced  | Presided    | Structured   |
| Assembled      | Drafted      | Informed    | Processed   | Succeeded    |
| Assisted       | Edited       | Initiated   | Produced    | Summarized   |
| Attained       | Educated     | Innovated   | Programmed  | Surveyed     |
| Balanced       | Eliminated   | Inspected   | Promoted    | Synthesized  |
| Built          | Encouraged   | Installed   | Proposed    | Tested       |
| Calculated     | Entertained  | Instituted  | Publicized  | Tracked      |
| Catalogued     | Established  | Instructed  | Recommended | Traded       |
| Chaired        | Estimated    | Integrated  | Recorded    | Trained      |
| Changed        | Evaluated    | Interviewed | Recruited   | Transformed  |
| Collaborated   | Examined     | Kept record | Redesigned  | Transmitted  |
| Communicated   | Executed     | Launched    | Reduced     | Tripled      |
| Compared       | Expanded     | Led         | Referred    | Typed        |
| Complied       | Explained    | Made        | Related     | Uncovered    |
| Completed      | Fabricated   | Maintained  | Repaired    | Unified      |
| Computed       | Facilitated  | Managed     | Reported    | Unraveled    |
| Conceptualized | Familiarized | Marketed    | Researched  | Upgraded     |
| Conducted      | Figured      | Moderated   | Restocked   | Used         |
| Consolidated   | Filed        | Modified    | Revised     | Verified     |
| Constructed    | Formulated   | Monitored   | Served      | Wrote        |
| Consulted      | Founded      | Motivated   | Set up      |              |
| Contracted     | Generated    | Negotiated  | Shaped      |              |
| Converted      | Grouped      | Obtained    | Simplified  |              |

# Write a cover letter that gets read

Some companies may forego the cover letter and instead send resumes through applicant tracking systems to screen for keywords that connect to their job descriptions. That said, many employers still want cover letters to help them better understand a candidate's unique qualifications.

Check the details of job postings to see if you can include a cover letter. If there are no guidelines, then take the opportunity to include one. This is your chance to sell yourself!

A cover letter is particularly important if you want to elaborate on your work history. For example, maybe you took some time out of the paid workforce to provide family care. Or perhaps you've chosen to apply for a position with considerably less responsibility than in your previous jobs.

Your cover letter should address why you are uniquely qualified for the position. Take time to think about your "personal brand"—the unique skills and strengths that make you attractive to an employer. Then follow these tips for what to include and what to avoid.

---

## What to include:

- Address it to a specific person, not just a title or department.
- Refer to the exact job you are applying for, including a reference code if there is one.
- Employ the active voice. For example, say, "I won an award," not "I was awarded."
- Describe why you're uniquely qualified. Cite relevant skills, experience and accomplishments, but don't simply repeat your resume. This is a chance to sell yourself!
- Tell the employer something about yourself that might not be clear from your resume.
- Use keywords from the job posting in your cover letter (as you should do in your resume).
- Proofread your cover letter several times for correct spelling and grammar. Also, consider sharing it with someone who can proofread it and give you his or her honest opinion. Does your letter make the reader want to know more about you? If not, revise it, highlighting the things that make you the best candidate for the job.

## What to avoid:

- Too much information! Several paragraphs are plenty.
- Generic language. Tailor your letter to the specific position.
- Unnecessary words, such as, "I am writing to..." or "Let me introduce myself..." Get right to your point.
- Direct age references. Rather than talk about your 30 or 40 years of experience, use words like "extensive" or "significant" to describe your experience.
- Salary requirements. Save this discussion for the interview. For those occasions where you can use the tried-and-true cover letter, take advantage and include one. Use our tips to help your application stand out!

## Resources

For more help from AARP on resumes, personal branding and more, visit [aarp.org/work](https://aarp.org/work).

# Sample cover letter

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Date

Andrus Grill and Catering  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

## Key for cover letter

Language from Job Description

Elements of Personal Brand

Dear Mr. Andrus:

I am interested in the **Restaurant Manager** position with Andrus Grill and Catering. In addition to aligning with my personal and professional interests, I believe my education and diverse experience in **restaurant management** uniquely qualifies me for this position.

I am a **highly talented and experienced restaurant and hospitality professional who is driven by creativity and innovation**. With extensive **experience in the hospitality and food industry**, I have worked in every restaurant position in both **front- and back-end operations**. This comprehensive experience has evolved into **a holistic management approach anchored in the guest experience**.

Currently I am working at Pine Tree Café as a General Manager **responsible for daily operations, marketing and staff development**. In addition to successfully directing the start-up of this restaurant, I created and implemented marketing campaigns and consumer engagement strategies to obtain feedback and **build customer loyalty**. I am adept at management software systems and seek out new opportunities to create efficiencies. I thrive in **fast-paced environments** that reward innovation.

I am confident that my **education, experience and dedication to quality service** will enable me to succeed at Andrus Grill and Catering. I look forward to an opportunity to further discuss my skills and experience that can benefit Andrus Grill and Catering.

Sincerely,  
Linda Jones

# Job application log

You have built your personal brand, created your elevator speech, mastered social media, networked, searched online job boards, updated your resume, tailored your cover letter, and applied for a job ... you likely applied for many jobs. It may be weeks or months before you hear from a potential employer. When you receive a call for an interview, you will want to avoid a situation where you are asking, "Which job was this again?"

Creating a simple job application log can help you stay organized and prepared for interview requests. While there are many free templates online to track your job application process, you can easily create and customize your own log through Microsoft Word, Excel, and even a paper journal. A sample application job log appears below to give you examples of what information you should track. Remember to keep a copy of the original job posting; it contains important information that will help you prepare for your interview.

| Application         | Date Applied              | Position                                     |                   | Resume Version Used                           | Job Source          |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------|---|---------------------|
|                     | 9/1/24                    | Restaurant Manager                           |                   | Chronological                                 | LinkedIn.com        |
| Company Information | Company                   | Phone  | Email             | Address                                       | Website             |
|                     | Andrus Grill and Catering | 000-000-0000                                 | [Name]@gmail.com  | Street Address<br>City, State Zip             | Website URL         |
| Interview Process   | Response Date             | Contact Person and Information               | Date of Interview | Interviewer Name(s)                           | Date Thank You Sent |
|                     | 9/10/24                   | Gus Andrus: 111-111-1111<br>[Name]@gmail.com | 9/21/24           | Ida Hiru, Director<br>Mick Ewenoffer, Manager | 9/21/24             |



# Case study: Linda Jones

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Linda Jones of Oriole, Oklahoma, was a very experienced restaurant manager. She'd had a good run, going from manager at a cake store to general manager of the Pine Tree Café in just a few years. She acquired a range of professional skills that included financial spreadsheets, word processing, and restaurant management. She liked her present job but wanted to do more, use more of her skills—and she thought she had something to offer.

So she put together a resume. But she did more than that. She also sat down and did a *Skills Inventory* in which she listed all the skills she'd had to use in her work and volunteer experience, also listing the outcomes, and the jobs to which those skills would apply:

## A sample skills inventory

| Skills   | Application   | Outcome  | Jobs needing this skill  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Managing skills, especially with diverse members with variable skills levels and motivation, getting them to work together toward a common goal. | Had to manage a very diverse team of variously skilled people in distributing food to a poor community at the Regional Food Pantry in Oriole, OK. | Our team learned what it had to do, worked together well, showed great cohesion, and was able to get the food out to even more people than we had planned for. | Catering; Emergency Services Coordinator; Amazon Distribution Centers; the U.S. Army; Restaurants or Hotels that are expanding their pickup and delivery services. |

She was hoping to find a high-end restaurant on one of the coasts that was building out, maybe adding a new line of offerings.

She polished up her LinkedIn profile, including an updated professional-looking photo and informative, intriguing information about her past achievements and future hopes. She posted her resume on a few hospitality industry job clearinghouses.

She started rehearsing her *Elevator Speech*, in case she found herself shoulder-to-shoulder with a famous restaurateur or at a jobs fair. It was pretty good:

*I am a highly experienced restaurant and hospitality professional and I'm driven by creativity and innovation. I have worked in every restaurant position, which allows me successfully to manage both front- and back-end operations. My "Lead By Example" style of management has turned restaurants with high staff turnover and poor customer service into exceptional teams and increased profits. I successfully pivoted my staff during COVID-19 to delivery and pickup only and then through a staged and gradual reopening.*

Then she saw a job posting from a place called Andrus Grill and decided to apply:

*Andrus Grill and Catering is a high-end charcoal-broiler and open-grill restaurant with customers who know their food. We are expanding our business and bringing more of the catering side into the grill side, and so we have a great opportunity for a Restaurant Manager. We want a manager who not only can oversee our restaurant and its rapidly growing Pickup and Delivery Service, but also help design our offerings and help with our public outreach. Our preferred candidate will have at least 5 years experience in restaurant management and also demonstrated excellence in financial management, staff training and sales supervision.*

Linda could see that her background would be ideal for the job. She liked the way the place described itself, especially the “high-end” part, and the knowledgeable customers. The management role sounded like one she’d really like, and the expansion sounded exciting. It also hinted at what she really craved—an expanded role on the financial and public relations side.

So she got out her resume. Since she had a good track record already in the hospitality industry, she decided to go with a chronological resume. And she tweaked it to make it suit the Andrus job description more closely. She wanted to bring out her diverse array of skills, and the good outcomes that resulted, both at her jobs and in her volunteer work. Here are a few things she tweaked:

Under her Skills Summary, she expanded the Management item, stocking it with keywords and phrases from the original job posting, to give her resume a better chance to be picked up during the employer’s applicant tracking system, designed to look for such terms. Now it read: “Skilled manager with wide experience in all areas of restaurant management, including daily operations, marketing and development, financial management, staff training, sales supervision, public outreach, and workplace health and safety. *Extensive experience in managing diverse staff and goods distribution.*”

Under Education and Training she decided to include a certificate in Individual Food Industry Leadership she had earned while at Pine Tree Café, at the suggestion of the store owner.

And under Related Experience, she recalled that her many years at the Regional Food Pantry involved a lot of management skills, including negotiation, on-the-spot training, bringing many very different people into a team, and getting food distributed. So she wrote *Organized and directed neighborhood food deliveries.*

Small tweaks, yes, but they could become conversation-starters later if she got a job interview.

## Linda Jones

Phone Number

Email Address

Linkedin profile URL

### SKILLS SUMMARY

- Restaurant Management: Skilled manager with wide experience in all areas of food service, including daily operations, marketing and development, staff training and workplace health and safety. Extensive experience in managing diverse staff and goods distribution.
- Financial Management: Excellent track record of maintaining low overhead, increasing sales and generating high-dollar profits.
- Customer relations: Proven skills in developing innovative ways to improve service and build customer loyalty.

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **General Manager, Pine Tree Café, Oriole, OK (2022–Present)**

Directed start-up of successful health-oriented restaurant. Manage, train and schedule 24 employees for 100-seat restaurant, including cook and wait staff. Manage menu development, purchasing, marketing and customer relations.

- Maintain low overtime and turnover; staff retention rate is 40 percent above industry standard.
- Developed marketing campaign to promote new lunch menu, resulting in a doubling of midday traffic within two months.
- Initiated customer opinion cards and implemented “coffee with the manager” to solicit feedback and build customer loyalty.
- Broke even after second year of café’s operation; exceeded previous year’s profits by 28 percent.

#### **Store Manager, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City, OK (2016–2022)**

Successfully completed company’s management training program and trained 35 cooks, dish area employees and wait staff. Supervised daily operations at two high-volume stores, each generating over \$1 million in profits annually.

- Accomplished 5 percent reduction in labor costs through better selection and training of staff.
- Enhanced and implemented employee safety procedures, lowering on-the-job injuries by 26 percent.
- Prepared annual budget for the location, a site consistently among the five most profitable restaurants in the company.

#### **Sales/Service Representative, Good Cuppa Joe Inc., Boulder, CO (2010–2016)**

Cultivated South Denver and mountain community markets selling espresso equipment, supplies and coffee to wide variety of hospitality outlets, including restaurants, coffee houses, hospitals and hotels. Trained restaurant sales staff in operating, marketing and merchandising coffee products.

- Led company in sales of leased equipment and supplies; exceeded gross margin profits by 34 percent.
- Developed and controlled 50 percent of market share in two key regions.
- Implemented a new “30-day trial program” resulting in 30 percent more placements.

**RELATED EXPERIENCE****Volunteer Community Liaison, Regional Food Pantry, Oriole, OK (2012–Present)**

- Coordinate pickups of surplus food from local merchants; develop sample recipes for recipients; advise food pantry volunteers on food safety and handling. Organized and directed neighborhood food deliveries.

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Bachelor of Science, Marketing and Management, Pitcairn University, Denver
- Trained in Restaurant Industry Systems and Remancon Systems
- Restaurant Management Training, The Cake Factory, Oklahoma City
- Completed courses in Microsoft Office Excel, Word, PowerPoint
- Individual Food Industry Leadership Certificate, Fenimore University

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- National Restaurant Association
- McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce
- Oklahoma Restaurant Association

## Cover letter

She sent the resume via email with a cover letter:

Date

Andrus Grill and Catering  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear Mr. Andrus:

I am interested in the **Restaurant Manager** position with Andrus Grill and Catering. In addition to aligning with my personal and professional interests, I believe my education and diverse experience in **restaurant management** uniquely qualifies me for this position.

I am a **highly talented and experienced restaurant and hospitality professional who is driven by creativity and innovation**. With extensive experience in the hospitality and food industry, I have worked in every restaurant position in both **front- and back-end operations**. This comprehensive experience has evolved into **a holistic management approach anchored in the guest experience**.

Currently I am working at Pine Tree Café as a General Manager **responsible for daily operations, marketing and staff development**. In addition to successfully directing the start-up of this restaurant, I created and implemented marketing campaigns and consumer engagement strategies to obtain feedback and **build customer loyalty**. I am adept at management software systems and seek out new opportunities to create efficiencies. I thrive in **fast-paced environments** that reward innovation.

I am confident that my **education, experience and dedication to quality service** will enable me to succeed at Andrus Grill and Catering. I look forward to an opportunity to further discuss my skills and experience that can benefit Andrus Grill and Catering.

Sincerely,  
Linda Jones

## Job application log

Linda kept tabs on all the jobs she applied for. Her entry in her Job Application Log for the Andrus job looked like this:

| Application         | Date Applied              | Position                                     |                  | Resume Version Used               | Job Source                                    |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|
|                     | 9/1/24                    | Restaurant Manager                           |                  | Chronological                     | LinkedIn.com                                  |                     |
| Company Information | Company                   | Phone  | Email            | Address                           | Website                                       |                     |
|                     | Andrus Grill and Catering | 000-000-0000                                 | [Name]@gmail.com | Street Address<br>City, State Zip | Website URL                                   |                     |
| Interview Process   | Response Date             | Contact Person and Information               |                  | Date of Interview                 | Interviewer Name(s)                           | Date Thank You Sent |
|                     | 9/10/24                   | Gus Andrus: 111-111-1111<br>[Name]@gmail.com |                  | 9/21/24                           | Ida Hiru, Director<br>Mick Ewenoffer, Manager | 9/21/24             |

### The job interview

Ms. Hiru and Mr. Ewenoffer, the two interviewers from Andrus, were nice but also focused on Linda. They asked her, “What do you consider to be your biggest management challenge?” And Linda answered, “Truthfully, even though I have big management challenges every day at the Pine Street Café, I think my biggest challenges have come as a Volunteer Community Liaison at the Regional Food Pantry in Oriole. All sorts of people come to help out, and all sorts of people need help. It takes a steady hand, a lot of stamina, and a lot of patience to get people to work together and get the food out to the people who need it. My time as a volunteer has taught me so much about how to negotiate with people and how to problem-solve on the ground. I’m really grateful I’ve had it.” She also discussed how she met the challenges of shifting the Pine Street Café’s business during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Thank yous

Linda emailed her two interviewers with words of thanks and decided to go the extra mile and slip an old-fashioned thank-you note in the mail. Whether she got the job or not, she knew she’d represented herself as well as she could, and she felt her presentation had connected. “Anyone who gets this job instead of me,” she said to herself, “is going to have to be pretty good.”

## Job application log

We've provided blank logs for you to use:

| Application | Date Applied | Position | Resume Version Used | Job Source |
|-------------|--------------|----------|---------------------|------------|
|             |              |          |                     |            |

| Company Information | Company | Phone | Email | Address | Website |
|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
|                     |         |       |       |         |         |

| Interview Process | Response Date | Contact Person and Information | Date of Interview | Interviewer Name(s) | Date Thank You Sent |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                   |               |                                |                   |                     |                     |

\_\_\_\_\_

| Application | Date Applied | Position | Resume Version Used | Job Source |
|-------------|--------------|----------|---------------------|------------|
|             |              |          |                     |            |

| Company Information | Company | Phone | Email | Address | Website |
|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
|                     |         |       |       |         |         |

| Interview Process | Response Date | Contact Person and Information | Date of Interview | Interviewer Name(s) | Date Thank You Sent |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                   |               |                                |                   |                     |                     |

\_\_\_\_\_

| Application | Date Applied | Position | Resume Version Used | Job Source |
|-------------|--------------|----------|---------------------|------------|
|             |              |          |                     |            |

| Company Information | Company | Phone | Email | Address | Website |
|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
|                     |         |       |       |         |         |

| Interview Process | Response Date | Contact Person and Information | Date of Interview | Interviewer Name(s) | Date Thank You Sent |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                   |               |                                |                   |                     |                     |

# The art of the interview

The good interviewee is well prepared and well rehearsed, knowledgeable about the company and the job. Here are some smart strategies.

## Interview preparation

Many interviews are won or lost before they start. A few tips:

- Via your network, talk to people who work or have worked there. Get a sense of the company culture and goals. Draw on these in your interview answers.
- Check out the company website. The *About* page tells about its history and values. The *Media* page will show recent accomplishments and points of emphasis.
- Check out the company's job ads. What jobs need filling? What kind of people and skill sets are preferred? Note keywords and phrases.
- Check out the company's social media presence on LinkedIn, X, Facebook, and other social media sites.
- Look at company reviews at sites such as Glassdoor ([glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com)).
- Ask for the name(s) of your interviewer(s). Get a sense of their backgrounds and present jobs. These may help you include each interviewer in your answers.

Practice conversational, concise, concrete answers. Connect your skills with your achievements. Stress that hiring you would benefit the company. Anticipate likely questions—"Tell us a little about yourself," "What value do you bring to this company?" or "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" Record yourself. Get a friend to listen and evaluate.

Refresh your recollection and details of your accomplishments. Go through old annual performance review documents to refresh your memory so that you can cite specific examples of your work.

## During the interview

**All interviews.** Make sure you:

- Eat beforehand.
- Dress well—all the way to your shoes.
- Are on time. Cell phone off!
- Maintain a confident smile—and hold it, even during tough questions.

- Maintain alert, relaxed posture and eye contact with your interviewers.
- If they want to make small talk, use it well: connect, show poise, interest.
- Be current. Don't reminisce and talk about the old days.
- Allow interviewers to set the pace.
- Stress your skills and achievements. Show you know the job description and respect the company and its work.
- Stay focused on what you can do for the company. Show how hiring you would bring value.

**Virtual interviews.** If the interview will take place via Zoom, Teams, Google Meet or other platforms, make sure you:

- Know how to use the platform and practice using it.
- Have a strong Wi-Fi connection and a clear, working computer microphone and camera.
- Choose a place that's presentable, quiet, and free from interruption.
- Check how you look on the screen, make your screen level with your face so you don't appear to be looking down on your interviewers and check to make sure your background is appropriate.
- Make sure you are facing the light source.

**In-person interviews:** Be sure to:

- Meet and greet your interviewer(s) with eye contact and a smile.
- Gently lean toward the person asking the question. Do not rush. Be thoughtful and energetic.
- If it's a panel interview, make sure to make eye contact with everyone in the room when you are giving your answers.

## After the interview

Write an email to thank each interviewer or have a thank-you note stamped and ready to write and mail directly after the interview.



# 10 Tough interview questions

You've landed an interview with your ideal employer—congratulations! Now it's time to prepare for the interview. The 10 questions below provide opportunities to present your best self and place the focus on your skills, your energy and the value you would bring to the employer. It's a good idea to practice your responses, either with friends or family or by yourself in front of a mirror or record yourself on your phone. It will help put you at ease during the actual interview. We've provided space for you to write out your answer to each question so you can practice.

AARP Work & Jobs, [aarp.org/work](https://aarp.org/work), has great tools and tips on managing your job search. In the meantime, read on for tips on handling tough interview questions.

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## #1 Tell me about yourself.

Make your answer short and sweet. Stick to skills and experience that relate to the specific job for which you're applying. Resist the impulse to stress your years of experience. It's more important to talk about your skills and achievements that show you can deliver. Emphasize your flexibility and positive, work-related attitude.

## #2 What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

It's important to put a positive spin on your pitch, even when speaking about a perceived negative. For example, "Thank you for asking. I believe that self-awareness is key to personal and professional growth, so I've spent time reflecting on both my strengths and weaknesses. One of my greatest strengths is my ability to adapt quickly to changes. As for weaknesses, I've been learning to better balance my natural inclination for perfectionism with a focus on efficiency." Keep it simple—and smile.

## #3 Describe a time when you worked on a project that didn't go as planned. What went wrong, and how did you adapt?

It takes a lot of thinking to be ready for this question. Avoid speaking in generalities. Be prepared to talk about a concrete example that shows how you can face challenges head-on—navigating through difficulties—and emerging stronger and more capable on the other side.

## #4 What would you do if you were given a project with little direction or support?

Lay out a clear 3-step approach that embraces this challenge as an opportunity for growth and leadership. **Step 1:** Gather as much information and knowledge as you can to understand the goal. **Step 2:** Reach out to colleagues and other stakeholders for their input, which shows you value teamwork. **Step 3:** Create a flexible project plan that sets milestones and allows for feedback and alignment with the larger team. Following this approach as best as you can, can help put you on the path to success.

**#5 What's the most innovative idea or solution you've brought to a team or company?**

Wrap your answer in a story and speak from the heart. Describe the idea or solution with clarity. Focus on how it was different from the traditional methods and why it was needed. Speak plainly about what the innovation did, without getting tangled in jargon or overly technical language. This helps make your experience relatable and memorable and shows your communication skills.

**#6 What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career and how did you overcome it?**

Keep your answer grounded and real. It's not about impressing with grand language, but showing your grit, adaptability and the positive attitude you bring to facing challenges. This approach will paint you as a proactive, thoughtful candidate, ready to learn from the past and bring those lessons into new opportunities.

**#7 Tell me about a time you failed. How did you handle it and what did you learn?**

Your focus should not be on the failure itself, but on showing how you've grown and persevered through challenges. This demonstrates what qualities you have and how they are highly valued by employers.

**#8 How do you prioritize tasks when you have multiple competing deadlines?**

This is a great opportunity to showcase not just your organizational skills, but also the breadth of

wisdom and maturity you bring to your professional life. So, whether it's a digital tool, a specific planning technique, or a way of engaging with colleagues, share what's worked for you. This isn't just about the tools themselves, but about how you've seamlessly integrated them into your work style, continuously adapting and learning over time.

**#9 Why should we hire you over other candidates?**

Start by discussing your work history, but don't just list off your past job titles. Instead, focus on the lessons you've learned and how those experiences make you a perfect fit for this role. Remember, what sets you apart is not just your years of experience, but the depth of understanding, resilience, and insight you've gained along the way. Not to mention, it shows your passion to keep learning and tackling new challenges.

**#10 Do you have any questions?**

For starters, answering "no" to this question says you're not really interested in the job. Show your interest and initiative by asking specific questions about anything that wasn't covered in the interview. Tailor your questions to the role, the company, and even the industry. This is your chance to not only learn more about your potential future at the company but also demonstrate how your skills can contribute to the organization.

## Take action!

- Prepare your answers to potential questions to help put yourself at ease during the interview.
- Always spin positive—highlight your skills and experiences at every opportunity.
- Research the salary range for the given job, but try not to have the salary discussion at this early stage.
- Find more help with your job search at [aarp.org/work](https://aarp.org/work).

# Working from home—and for yourself

More and more people are working from home (WFH); the numbers have been growing since the turn of the millennium. Some workers have employers who prefer it that way. Some are freelancers. And some are entrepreneurs who run their businesses out of their homes. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced millions more to the joys and frustrations of WFH. For some, it's an easy transition; for others, it's awkward and isolating. Some considerations:

- **Dedicate a part of your home to your office.** Whether it's a corner of the kitchen table or a converted bedroom or study, it should be comfortable and free from interruption.
- **Have excellent Wi-Fi and a good computer microphone.** If the mic isn't great, consider getting an external mic that attaches to your computer.
- **Master Teams, Zoom, Google Meet and the other major platforms for virtual meetings.**
- **Have a professional routine you follow faithfully.** Keep yourself to your schedule.
- **Shower and dress for work.** It sounds corny, but studies show it helps get you focused and in the mood.

## Maintain balance between home and work life

Work is work and home is home. People who are good at WFH know how to honor the boundaries between the two. Here are some tips for maintaining balance:

- **Let everyone in the house know when your hours are. Set and keep boundaries.**
- **Give yourself a break—in fact, several of them.** Take a real lunch break—and several shorter breaks to stretch, have a snack, or check in with family or friends.
- **Set a hard and fast quitting time.** Guard against work creep!
- **Schedule exercise, hobbies or outdoor time.** Self-care is essential.
- **Have a memento of home in your office.** A family photo, a soccer trophy, a framed diploma—something that reminds you that this, too, is home.

## Tips for freelancers

If you are a one-person business working at home, you're still a business. Here are some important tips:

- **Read job descriptions thoroughly.** Note difficulties and ask clients for clarification.
- **Consider having a basic contract you'll present to all clients.** This will have all relevant names, dates, and amounts.
- **Never start a job unless you are clear on deadlines and payment** (how much, in what intervals), as well as on what happens in unusual circumstances (kill fees, budget cuts, etc.).
- **Determine whether you'll be paid hourly or with project-based flat rates.** Hourly can make sense for some shorter-term projects, but longer and larger ones usually call for flat rates. With more experience, you'll get a sense of what the market will bear.

- **Manage your workload.** Be wary of taking on too much work. Be realistic about how long each project will take, and how well you can meet the various deadlines.
- **Manage your calendar with intense attention.** Always know your schedule and important deadlines coming up. Use reminders on your computer or phone. Link your smart service device (Alexa, Siri, etc.) to your calendar and then program reminders.
- **Work on your brand. Get it out there.** Network on LinkedIn (see above, pages 12-15) and other platforms. Publicize milestones, achievements and awards. Don't ignore X and Facebook, either—post both brand-related material (what you're up to; what's happening in your field) and other content that interests you.
- **Work on your pitching skills.** Master the art of selling your skills and achievements in direct, concise, eye- and ear-catching fashion.
- **Ask satisfied clients for referrals and recommendation letters.** Do this right at the end of successful projects, and follow up politely if clients are slow in responding.
- **Take an active part in both online and in-person professional gatherings.** Network with people in your field. Follow thought leaders and people you'd like to emulate.
- **Know your tax laws.** Many, perhaps most freelancers pay state and local taxes via estimated payments; know the dates. You'll also pay Social Security taxes at the end of the year. Stay up on changes to Schedules C and E, home office deductions, deductions for business-related expenses, equipment amortization, and other matters. Consider purchasing software packages such as TurboTax, E-File.com, or H&R Block to help.
- **Keep excellent records.** That includes a history of all clients, payment records, and expenses.
- **Keep in touch with old clients.** Check in with former clients and ask how they're doing. They become part of your network of contacts, the circle of good work, recommendations, referrals—and new clients!

# Reskilling and upskilling

In almost every field imaginable, the workplace is changing more quickly every year. Whether it's Slack, Teams, Zoom or AI, new technologies and skills come along, and workers have to master them. That's why employers are looking for workers who are developing their skills and are willing to try new things. It's pretty much a requirement these days, no matter where you work.

Why stand still with the same set of skills you had when you started? You don't want to find yourself with a dreaded "skills gap." That's why two of the hottest topics in the job market today are *reskilling* (learning new skills) and *upskilling* (bringing your skills to a new level, often through professional certificate courses or full-blown academic courses).

Why reskill? Why upskill? People seeking these skills enhancements tend to be those who

- Are changing careers.
- Are returning to the workplace after time away.
- Want to stay competitive with new hires.

Let your employers know. Take advantage of any enrichment/enhancement/reskilling opportunities your employers offer. Let them know you are not only open but eager to enlarge or change your skill set.

AARP also offers resources for reskilling and upskilling. AARP Skills Builder for Work<sup>SM</sup> provides self-paced, online courses to help give you an edge in today's competitive job market. Choose from a wide variety of categories, including computer applications, marketing, HR Management, finance, career building and many others. Learn more at [www.aarp.org/skills](http://www.aarp.org/skills).

## Certificate programs vs. Certification

You need to reskill. Or you need to upskill. Either way, you probably have a certificate program or certification course in your future. The former lets you acquire focused skills in a particular profession. The latter gives you a valuable series of letters after your name, a much-valued sign of achievement and commitment.

Certificate programs are:

- Courses you take to build up a very specific skill set in your field. Such fields include health care, web development, information security, bookkeeping, real estate, financial and tax advisory services, surgical technology, sheet metal work, and plumbing.
- Usually relatively shorter-term, less expensive and easier to learn and master.
- Are valued because they fill in skill gaps and show your drive and your commitment to learning.
- Offered through online training programs, community colleges, and an increasing number of four-year institutions (both in-person or online). As of now, many of the finest universities have robust online offerings, places such as the University of California, Pennsylvania State University, Arizona State University, Cornell University, and Duke University.
- A relatively quick, affordable way to add skills to your resume.

**Should you take a certificate course in your field?** You don't want to spend time and money (while working!) on a course that may not improve your situation that much. In fields such as hospitality, actual experience is valued more highly than certificates. But many others, such as human relations, IT, and the technical fields, all but expect workers to be in constant learning mode. Find out the answers to these questions:

- Is the program really valued in the field and by my employer?
- Did my employer(s) mention the certificate in the job description?
- Do a lot of people in my field have this certificate?

**Who offers certificate programs?** One great information warehouse is Coursera, the online education provider that offers MOOCs or Massively Open Online Courses, from top universities and companies around the world. Your local two-year college or university might offer some. And your present employer might know what's available.

#### Certification

- Feature “the Three E’s”: education, experience, and examination.
- Are longer-term, more expensive, and academically demanding.
- Often have an in-person component—including extensive in-person training or other professional experience.
- Feature a rigorous examination that must be passed to earn the certification.
- Often have a continuing education aspect—that is, you will periodically take more classes to keep your certification up to date.
- Give you a string of letters to put after your name, much valued in the workplace. Examples include CFP (Certified Financial Planner), HRCI (Human Resource Certification Institute), PMP (Project Management Professional), and PCA (Professional Cloud Architect).

**How do I find certification courses?** You want a well-respected, accredited program (that is, a respected outside organization has found that it meets high educational quality standards) at an accredited site reasonably near you, one that suits your schedule. Don't enter just any program. Do your research to make sure the school and course are accredited. You can also ask:

- Your current employer
- Contacts in your field
- Alumni/ae of the course or school you're considering

You can also go to the **Certification Finder** at the CareerOneStop site, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, which can help you jump-start your search for good courses in your field.

**Don't hide it!** Whenever you earn a new certificate or certification, make sure it goes on your (a) resume and (b) LinkedIn profile!

# National resources

**AARP Work & Jobs** provides resources and tools to help you find a job, tweak your resumes, polish interviewing skills, negotiate a salary and benefits, explore a second career path, explore flexible work arrangements, consider self-employment, and more. ([aarp.org/work](http://aarp.org/work))

**Career One-Stop Centers** provide employment assistance to job seekers in over 2,000 communities across the U.S. One-Stop Centers offer help with finding a job, planning your next career steps or change, locating training, and coping with job loss. To find one closest to you, call toll-free 1-877-US2-JOBS (1-877-872-5627). ([servicelocator.org](http://servicelocator.org))

The **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** is the only federal program specifically targeted to serve older adults seeking employment and training assistance. SCSEP helps job seekers 55+ strengthen work skills, obtain training, and find job opportunities. (For SCSEP, income eligibility guidelines do apply.) ([dol.gov/agencies/eta/seniors](http://dol.gov/agencies/eta/seniors))

**Seniors4Hire** offers job postings for workers 50 and older and retirees, plus an online community for people looking to recruit such workers. Users can search for jobs, post resumes, and find resources and publications. ([seniors4hire.org](http://seniors4hire.org))

**U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)** provides information, one-on-one counseling and training at no charge to individuals who seek to start their own business. SBA centers are located throughout the country and have libraries, special services for women entrepreneurs, and access to market research databases. ([sba.gov](http://sba.gov))

**Workforce50.com (formerly Senior Job Bank)** has jobs for older workers, experienced workers, and job-changers, along with information for the job search. Search jobs by location or by employer. Experts cover topics including jobs, use of social media, or strategic resume writing for a less than perfect work history. ([workforce50.com](http://workforce50.com))

**O\*Net OnLine (The Occupational Information Network)** provides public access to the O\*Net database, the nation's primary source of occupational information in the United States. Get instant access to skills, competencies and occupational requirements for over 900 occupations. Use it for career exploration, understanding skills and training needed and finding occupations that match your interests. ([onetonline.org](http://onetonline.org))

**Big Interview** is a platform that provides comprehensive job interview training and preparation tools, including video tutorials, mock interview simulators, resume reviewer and more. ([biginterview.com](http://biginterview.com))

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AARP has a series of online resources that can assist in your job search strategy. Visit **AARP Work & Jobs** ([aarp.org/work](http://aarp.org/work)) for the latest tips and tools for your job search strategy. Here are some examples:

- [5 Things to Do If You're Thinking of Switching Careers](#)
- [5 Secrets to Getting Hired After 50](#)
- [Certificates That Can Launch Bright New Careers](#)
- [7 Ways to Improve Your LinkedIn Profile](#)
- [How Job Search Has Changed](#)
- [Thriving in the Multi-Generational Workplace](#)
- [How to Show Accomplishments on Your Resume](#)
- [How to Fight Back Against Age Discrimination](#)
- [How to Feel Less Nervous When Interviewing for a Job](#)
- [Working from Home: 5 Steps to Set Boundaries](#)

## Notes



## Notes

## Notes



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