



Guide to Employment

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Looking for a Job



Preparing

Background Checks

Some employers may require a background check as part of the hiring process. These checks can help employers verify information and ensure a safe, trusted workplace. Requirements vary by employer and position, so be prepared to provide accurate information and complete any required forms.

Drug Tests

Depending on the employer and position, you may also be required to complete a drug test as part of the hiring process. Be prepared to follow the employer's testing requirements and provide any necessary information.

Social Media

Some employers may review your public social media profiles as part of the hiring process. Make sure your online presence is professional and reflects the positive image you want to present to potential employers. Review your posts, photos, comments, and public profiles, and remove or update anything that could negatively impact your job search.

Create an Elevator Pitch

A strong elevator pitch is more than a summary of your resume. Its purpose is to quickly answer the question, "Why should someone want to keep talking to you?" Whether you are at a networking event, job fair, interview, or speaking with a recruiter, your pitch should leave the listener with a clear understanding of your background and the value you bring.

- 1 Start with who you are:** Share your name and a brief description of your experience
- 2 Highlight your strengths:** Mention one to two key skills, accomplishments, or qualities
- 3 Share your goals:** Explain the type of job you are looking for
- 4 Show your enthusiasm:** Let your confidence come through
- 5 Keep it short:** Practice your pitch so you can deliver it in 30–60 seconds



Job Search Websites

Use these websites to explore job opportunities and find positions which match your skills, experience, and career goals. Search by job title, location, and other preferences to find the right opportunities for you.

USAJOBS www.usajobs.gov

glassdoor www.glassdoor.com

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/jobs

CAREER BUILDER www.careerbuilder.com

ZipRecruiter www.ziprecruiter.com

flexjobs www.flexjobs.com

Applying

Resume vs. Cover Letter

A resume and cover letter serve different purposes; however, both are usually important parts of a successful job application. Your resume highlights your experience, skills, and qualifications, while your cover letter allows you to explain your interest in the position and show why you are a strong fit. When requested, submit both to present a complete picture of what you can bring to the job.



Resume

- Highlights your skills
- Lists work history and education
- Short, easy to read sections



Cover Letter

- Explains your interest
- Why you are a good fit for the role
- Connects your experience to the job

Head to page six for more information and templates to help you create.



E-mailing a Potential Employer

If reaching out directly, keep your e-mail professional, clear, and brief. Use it to introduce yourself, express your interest, and make a positive first impression.

- Use a clear subject line.
- Address the employer professionally.
- Introduce yourself and state why you are reaching out.
- Attach your resume.
- Proofread before sending.
- Include your contact information.

Interviews and Job Fairs

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Research the company. Understand its products, services, mission, and culture.

Study the job description. Be ready to explain how your skills and experience match.

Prepare examples. Use the S.T.A.R. method to answer questions with specific stories.

Practice common questions. Examples include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want this job?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about a challenge you overcame.

Know your resume well. Be prepared to discuss anything you have listed.

STAR Method

S SITUATION

An event, project, or challenge faced

T TASK

Your responsibilities for the situation

A ACTION

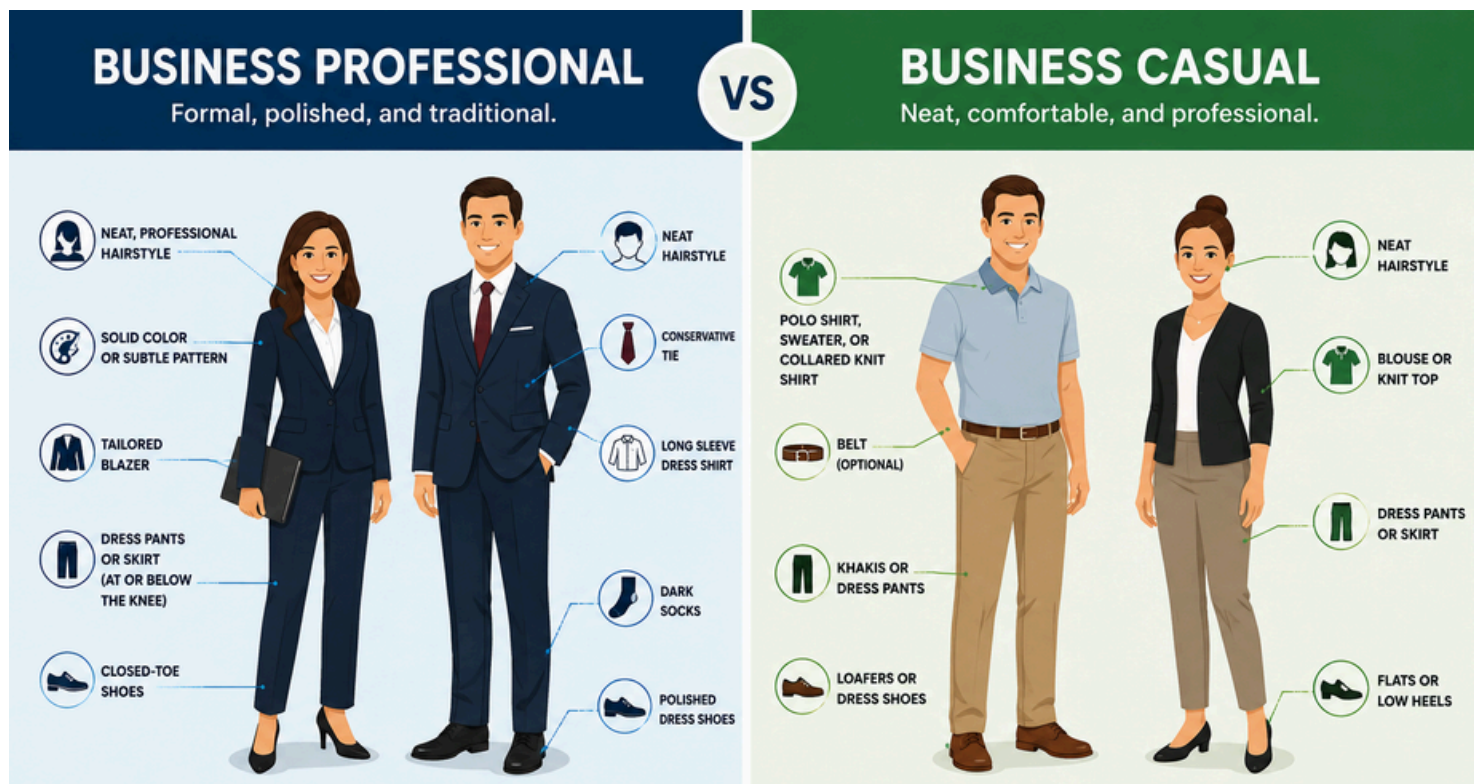
Steps taken to relieve the situation

R RESULT

Results of actions taken

Dressing for Success

Dress clean, neat, and appropriately for the workplace for which you are interviewing. When in doubt, choose a more professional look.



DURING THE INTERVIEW

- **Arrive early**, or log in 5–10 minutes early for virtual interviews
- **Dress appropriately** for the company’s culture
- **Maintain good eye contact** and confident body language
- **Listen carefully** before answering
- **Keep your answers focused** and concise



Ask Good Questions

Near the end of the interview, ask thoughtful questions such as:

- What does success look like in this role in the first 90 days?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the team?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?



Avoid These Common Mistakes

- Speaking negatively about previous employers or coworkers
- Interrupting the interviewer
- Giving vague or overly long answers
- Focusing only on salary and benefits in the first interview (unless the interviewer raises the topic)
- Forgetting to silence your phone



AFTER THE INTERVIEW



Be sure to send a thank-you e-mail within 24 hours of the interview, reiterating your interest in the position. To personalize your message, mention something specific you discussed during the interview.



Quick Interview Checklist

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Research the company and role | ☐ Prepare thoughtful questions |
| ☐ Prepare 5–7 S.T.A.R. stories | ☐ Bring copies of your resume |
| ☐ Review your resume | ☐ Dress appropriately |
| ☐ Practice interview questions | ☐ Arrive early |
| | ☐ Send thank-you e-mail |

On the Job



First Day Tips

Before You Arrive

- Plan your commute and aim to arrive 10–15 minutes early.
- Review any on-boarding materials you have received.
- Dress appropriately for the company culture.



During the Day

- Introduce yourself confidently
- Listen more than you speak
- Take notes
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Show enthusiasm



Building Relationships

- Meet your team members and understand their roles
- Be approachable and friendly
- Find out who to go to for different types of questions



Staying Professional



Your attitude, communication, and behavior all contribute to the impression you make at work. Be respectful, reliable, and positive, and remember that professionalism means knowing how to communicate appropriately with coworkers, supervisors, and customers.

- **Communicate respectfully** with coworkers, supervisors, and customers.
- **Be reliable** by arriving on time and following through on tasks.
- **Keep a positive attitude** and stay professional

Understanding Your Paystub

Your paystub shows how you were paid and how deductions affect your take-home pay. Review your paystub every pay period and keep it for your records.

ABC COMPANY

Pay Date: 05/24/2024
Pay Period: 05/11/2024 – 05/24/2024

1

EMPLOYEE INFO

Jane Doe
Employee ID: 12345
Department: Customer Service

2

PAY INFORMATION

Pay Type: Regular
Filing Status: Single
Pay Frequency: Bi-Weekly
Allowances: 1

3

EARNINGS

DESCRIPTION	HOURS	RATE	CURRENT	YTD
Regular Pay	80.00	\$20.00	\$1,600.00	\$16,000.00
Overtime Pay	2.00	\$30.00	\$60.00	\$600.00
Holiday Pay	–	–	\$80.00	\$320.00
TOTAL EARNINGS			\$1,740.00	\$16,920.00

4

DEDUCTIONS

DESCRIPTION	CURRENT	YTD
Federal Income Tax	\$174.20	\$1,742.00
Social Security (6.2%)	\$107.88	\$1,078.80
Medicare (1.45%)	\$25.17	\$251.70
State Income Tax	\$68.50	\$685.00
Health Insurance	\$75.00	\$750.00
401(k) Contribution	\$100.00	\$1,000.00
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$550.75	\$5,507.50

5

NET PAY SUMMARY

Total Earnings	\$1,740.00
Total Deductions	–\$550.75
NET PAY	\$1,189.25

6

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Bank: Main Street Bank
Amount: \$1,189.25
Account: Checking ****1234

Employee Info: Your personal and job information

Pay Information: Details about your pay, schedule, and tax withholding

Earnings: Shows how much you earned this pay period and year-to-date

Deductions: Pre-tax and after-tax amounts deducted from your pay

Net Pay Summary: Your earnings minus deductions; this is your take-home pay

Direct Deposit: Where your net pay is deposited

Planning for Your Future



How to Leave Your Job

When it is time to move on, leave on a positive note. Being professional can help protect your reputation and maintain valuable relationships. Review your company's policy or ask your supervisor how much notice is expected. Two weeks is common, but requirements can vary by employer.

- Tell your supervisor before your coworkers
- Keep your resignation professional and positive
- Finish your responsibilities and help with the transition
- Thank your employer and coworkers
- Avoid negative comments or burning bridges



Finding Your Career Values

Career values are the principles which matter most to you in work. Common examples are work-life balance, financial stability, and growth and learning.

Revisit the ranking after major life changes (a new family responsibility, relocation, promotion), since the order can shift even if the underlying list of values stays the same.

1 Spot your values

Good moments

- You got to make your own choices
- You helped someone or solved a problem
- You got praised or noticed
- You learned something brand new

Hard moments

- No one asked your opinion
- Your work felt pointless
- Nobody noticed your effort
- Every day felt the same

Tip: whatever was missing in your hard moments is usually a value you care about.

2 Rank what matters most

Growth Balance Money Impact Team

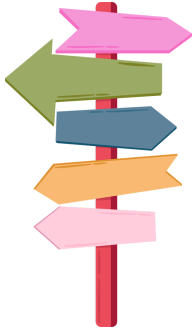
↓ compare two at a time ↓

Growth Impact Team

- 1 Write down **everything** you care about at work.
- 2 Pick two and ask: "If I could only keep one, which would I choose?"
- 3 Keep comparing until you find your **top 3 to 5** values.
- 4 Use your list to decide **what you won't give up** in a job.
- 5 Big life change? **Check your list again** — it can shift.

Creating a Career Plan

A career plan can help you turn your goals into clear, achievable steps. Whether you're looking for your first job, hoping to advance, or considering a new career, having a plan can keep you focused and motivated.



1 Know Where You Want to Go – See **Page 13** for a Template.
Think about the type of work you enjoy, your strengths, and what you want your career to look like.

- What jobs or careers interest you?
- What skills do you already have?
- What income do you want to earn?
- Where do you want to be in one, three, or five years?

2 Identify What You Need – See **Page 13** for a Template.
Research your career goal and find out what employers are looking for.

- Education or certifications
- Technical or computer skills
- Soft skills, such as communication and teamwork
- Licenses or specialized training



3 Set SMART Goals – See **Page 14** for Template.
Make your goals **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound**

Instead of: "I want a better job."

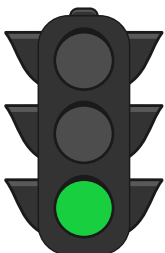
Try: "I will complete a customer service certification within three months and apply for five customer service positions each week."

4 Take Action – See **Page 15** for Template.
Break your big goal into smaller steps you can work on regularly.

My Career Goal: _____

My Next Three Steps: _____

Target Date: _____



5 Making It Happen – See **Page 15** for Template.
Identify any other challenges you are facing which may be preventing your next step.

Do you have Internet access?

Do you have reliable transportation?

Resume Example

Follow the format below and create your own, or use Rainbow's Resume Creator!

Mary Young

14 Pike Road
Erie, PA 16507

Phone: (814) 123-4567
resumepowersample@gmail.com

GOAL: HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST

- Dynamic, performance-driven professional with a master's degree in labor studies, seeking an entry-level HR position with a large company. Extensive knowledge of labor laws and excellent negotiating skills.
- Recognized for leadership skills, project completions, and willingness to assume additional responsibilities.
- Self-motivated with a passion to achieve objectives through dedication, integrity, trust, and hard work.

EDUCATION

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Philadelphia, PA

Master of Science, Labor Studies, 2010

- **Internship:** Operating Engineers – New Hope, PA, 2009
- **Related Courses:** Labor Arbitration, Composition of Labor Movements, Labor and Employment Law, Labor History, Labor Research Practicum, Collective Bargaining, Current Issues in Labor, Financial Analysis

QUEENS COLLEGE

Flushing, NY

Bachelor of Arts, Major in Sociology, 2007

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ABC SPORTS COMPANY

Philadelphia, PA

Sales Manager, 2009 to present – Oversee daily operations and sales performance for sporting goods emporium. Interact with people of diverse backgrounds and provide impeccable customer service.

- Expanded company's product line and increased sales by 22% (2000 YTD) by targeting local market and initiating successful promotional campaigns.
- Added radio spots to advertising mix to increase sales and visibility in local arena. Promotions enhanced company's image and directly increased the number of shoppers.
- Built and established loyal customer base in local market, generating repeat business and referrals.
- Organized window displays to entice tourists and locals to enter the store.

UNITED PARCEL SERVICE

Philadelphia, PA

Sorter / Unloader, 1998 to 1999 – Unloaded tractor-trailer trucks.

- Developed strategy for faster delivery and won approval to implement plan; promoted to sorter.

ACE ELECTRIC COMPANY

Astoria, NY

Machinist, 1992 to 1995 – Operated punch press and performed routine equipment maintenance.

- Participated in "High Involvement" program, serving as production representative and shop steward.
- Established credibility and trust with workers, which contributed to improved performance, productivity, and safety.

Cover Letter Example

Use the format below or ask your Resident Services Coordinator for assistance.

Jimmy Anderson

Graphic Designer

+123 456 7890

hello@reallygreatsite.com

123 Anywhere St., Any City

Hiring Manager

Lumina Studio

123 Anywhere St., Any City

Thursday, 23 October 2025

Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing to express my interest in the Senior Graphic Designer position at Lumina Studio. With two years of experience in the graphic design field, I have developed a solid foundation in visual storytelling, brand development, and project management, which I believe would be a valuable asset to your team.

I have had the opportunity to work on various design projects, from digital marketing campaigns to corporate branding. My previous role at Astech Studio allowed me to take on significant responsibilities, including leading design projects, collaborating closely with clients, and ensuring high-quality, impactful visuals. I am particularly skilled in Creative Suite Software, and my expertise extends to creating designs that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also align with client objectives and brand values.

I am drawn to Lumina Studio due to your commitment to creativity and innovation, and I am excited about the opportunity to contribute my skills to your projects. I am confident that my attention to detail, dedication to quality, and ability to meet deadlines under pressure will allow me to make a meaningful impact in this role.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my background and passion for design align with the goals of Lumina.

Warmest regards,

Jimmy Anderson

Know Where You Want to Go



Think about the type of work you enjoy, your strengths, and what you want your career to look like. Fill out the template below.

What jobs or careers interest you?

1	_____	3	_____
2	_____	4	_____

What skills do you already have?

1	_____	6	_____
2	_____	7	_____
3	_____	8	_____
4	_____	9	_____
5	_____	10	_____

What income would you like to earn?

\$ _____

Where do you want to be in _____ year(s)?

1	_____
3	_____
5	_____

Identify What You Need

Research your career goal and find out what employers are looking for. Fill out the template below.

Does the career you are interested in require any certifications, technical skills, licenses, or specialized training?

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Template RAINBOW

Initial Goal	Write the goal that you have in mind. Keep it meaningful. Health, wealth, or career goal.
S Specific	What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?
M Measurable	How can you measure progress and know if you have met your goal?
A Achievable	Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? What is the motivation for achieving this goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?
R Relevant	Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with our overall objectives?
T Time-Bound	What is the deadline, and is it realistic?
S.M.A.R.T. Goal	Review your answers above and craft a new goal statement based on them.

Break your big goal into smaller steps you can work on regularly. Fill out the template below.

My career goal:

My next three steps:

1

2

3

Target completion date:



Making It Happen

Identify any other challenges you are facing which may be preventing your next step. Fill out the template below.

Do you currently have:

- ☐ Lack of reliable transportation?
- ☐ Lack of childcare or dependent care?
- ☐ Health conditions or a disability?
- ☐ Limited English proficiency or language barriers?
- ☐ Lack of Internet or technology to apply or interview?
- ☐ Lack of valid ID or documentation?

If you select any of the checkboxes, Rainbow is here to help. We will work to connect you with resources you may need to accomplish your career goals.

[Click Here to E-mail Resident Services](#)