

Jobseeker Playbook

A guide for those new to the
workforce in Canada



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Introduction

Job searching can be stressful, time-consuming, and discouraging—especially when you urgently need income. While it may feel overwhelming, having a strong job search strategy can make a big difference!

If you are new to Canada, the workplace culture, communication style, and employer expectations may be different from your home country, so strategies that worked well before might not be as effective here. Adapting to the local job market will improve your chances of making a good impression and getting a job.

This booklet is based on insights from newcomer jobseekers, Canadian employers, employment service providers, and online resources. It offers a brief summary of the biggest challenges newcomers face when entering the job market and useful tips to get started on your job search. While there's no instant solution for the challenges of job searching, this guide will help you navigate the process with more confidence.



Job Search Strategies

Be Realistic

Identify your goals, needs, resources, and limitations to make your job search more effective and realistic. Narrow down your search to a few categories instead of applying to everything.

Pay Attention to Details

Read the whole job posting and do some research before you apply. Consider not just job titles, but location, hours, pay, and schedule. Follow any instructions for applying.

Pay Attention to Soft Skills

Soft skills are very important, especially in entry-level jobs. Key traits include reliability, following instructions, being teachable, organization, understanding professional expectations, and being proactive.

Customize Your Applications

It's your job to convince the employer that you're a good match. Use your resume and cover letter to demonstrate your skills, and make sure they are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Stay Organized

Keep track of where you applied and when, and download the job description and save it. Save the different versions of your resumes and keep them organized.

Build Your Network

Volunteer, get involved in programs, and attend networking events. This will both build and demonstrate your skills, and connect you to more opportunities. If you are trying to get a referral or reference, remember that they need to know you and your skills!

Keep Learning

Use LinkedIn, employment services, networks, and other resources to keep building your professional skills.

Tip: See chapter 9 and 10 for more on reliability and initiative!

Volunteering

How is volunteering related to job searching? Volunteering is very common in Canada and is expected by many employers. It is more formal than just helping, and usually requires applying and completing a police background check. It's also very valuable, both personally and professionally.

Benefits of Volunteering:

- Build your network and connection to your community
- Improve your mental health
- Practice your English and learn about Canadian culture
- Develop your professional skills
- Get access to training and resources
- Add valuable skills and experience to your resume
- Demonstrate soft skills

To get the most benefit from volunteering:

- ✓ Volunteer consistently at the same organization for a longer period of time (aim for at least 30 hours total). This will demonstrate your skills more effectively and increase the chance of getting a reference.
- ✓ Treat your volunteer position similar to a job: be reliable, communicate with your supervisor, support your team, and complete your tasks as well as you can.
- ✓ Look for volunteer positions with organizations you care about or that are related to your interests.

Contact info@kinbridge.ca for volunteer opportunities at Kinbridge!



Resume Basics

Your resume is usually an employer's first impression of you, and it indirectly demonstrates many skills. Employers usually decide whether or not to interview you based on your resume and cover letter.

A good resume is...

- ✓ Easy to read, with consistent formatting, clear headings, and enough space between sections.
- ✓ 1 page for entry-level jobs, 2 pages for other jobs.
- ✓ A demonstration of your knowledge, skills, achievements, and professionalism, not just a list of your jobs.
- ✓ Concise, clear, and relevant to the job you're applying for.
- ✓ Customized for your experience and for the job you're applying for.

1 Use a template

Use Google Docs or Microsoft Office for free, editable templates. A template helps to keep your formatting professional and makes sure you don't miss essential information.

3 Be honest

Present your skills as well as you can, but be honest. Never add experience, skills, or certifications that you don't really have.

For more detailed advice, ask for a copy of our resume handouts for professionals and for youth.

2 Get feedback

Ask a teacher or coach to review your resume. They can help make sure it is clear and has no spelling or grammar mistakes.



Cover Letter Basics

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a 3-4 paragraph letter that is attached to your application. It should add to your resume by explaining and giving more detail or examples, not just repeat it.

What does it include?

Your cover should include:

- Which job you're applying for and how you heard about it (if you were referred)
- Why you want this job specifically
- Why you'd be good at it and how your experience has prepared you for this job.

Just like your resume, it should be specific to the job and company you're applying to.

Why use one?

A cover letter will make employers notice your application because you made an extra effort! It is more personal - think of it as a written introduction to who you are and what type of employee you are.

Tip: Find templates and examples online



<https://ca.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/cover-letter-format>

DEFINITION:

Soft Skills:

Personal qualities that help people work well with others, such as communication and problem-solving. Often learned through life experience.

Hard Skills:

Specific, teachable abilities needed for a job, like using software, operating machinery, or analyzing data. Often learned at school.

Email Essentials

Email is the main form of communication in workplaces and for job applications! It is very important that you know how to use it and use it well if you want to get positive replies and make a good impression.

- ✓ Check your email regularly - every day if you are job searching. Reply to messages quickly. (This also applies to voicemail)
- ✓ Use/create a simple email address based on your name (ex: first_lastname@ mail.com)
- ✓ Check for correct spelling and grammar, and make sure your tone is polite and professional.
- ✓ Write a clear and concise message with your information or request.
- ✓ Don't write in ALL CAPS - that means you're yelling.
- ✓ Don't use emojis, texting abbreviations, or slang.
- ✓ If sharing a link or attachment, or forwarding an email, explain what it is and why you are sending it.
- ✓ Always include a short, informative subject line that says what your email is about.
- ✓ When emailing someone new, start with saying who you are, what the connection is, and why you are emailing.



Using AI for Your Job Search

ChatGPT and other AI tools can be a great resource to **help** you in your job search and resume writing, but they should never replace critical thinking and research. When your resume, cover letter, or email are obviously AI-generated, employers might feel you are **dishonest** or **lazy**, and it won't represent you very well.

Helpful uses of AI:

- ✓ Generating potential interview questions to practice
- ✓ Proofreading, editing, and improving your writing
- ✓ Identifying the top skills in a job description
- ✓ Analyzing how well the resume matches the job posting and identifying potential gaps



Tip: [Click to go to a LinkedIn Learning course on ChatGPT prompts for job seekers.](#)

Caution!

Don't put any confidential, personal information into ChatGPT or any other AI tool

Unhelpful uses of AI:

- Copying and pasting without editing, proofreading, and checking for accuracy ✗
- Using it inconsistently (for one portion of your resume but not another) ✗
- Overusing 'buzzwords' that you would never normally use ✗
- Using generic AI-generated descriptions or profile summaries that could apply to almost anyone ✗

Interviews

Entry-level jobs will usually only have one interview, which is generally less than 30 minutes. Higher level jobs might have longer interviews or multiple stages.

Many employers do a short phone or online “screening” interview first.

Many employers do “panel interviews” with 2 or more interviewers.

Before the Interview:

- Research the company and sector and review the job posting carefully
- Use ChatGPT or similar tools to generate a list of sample interview questions to prepare.
- Reflect on your skills and experience and how they would apply to this job.
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Prepare thoughtful questions that demonstrate your knowledge and interest.

During the Interview:

- Use active listening strategies: pay attention to what they’re saying, ask clarifying questions, refer back to things they mentioned or from the job description.
- Make regular eye contact.
- Sit with good posture and try to not fidget.
- Keep your answers between 1-3 minutes for most questions.
- Take notes!

For more information and tips:
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers>

Tip: Try to not be discouraged if you don’t get a lot of interviews, or don’t get a response after an interview. It’s very normal! See it as a chance to learn and grow, and stay optimistic.

Types of Interview questions

Mostly Hard Skills

1 Knowledge-based

Questions focused on your knowledge: information, theories, definitions, etc.

2 Practical/skill test

The interviewer asks you to complete a task to demonstrate your skills, such as an online assessment. (*NOT the same as being asked to do a “trial shift”*).

Mostly Soft Skills

3 Behavioural

The interviewer asks about a real experience you have had which demonstrates your skills or personality.

4 Situational

The interviewer describes a situation you might experience at work and asks, “What would you do?”

The employer’s goals in an interview:

- Evaluate your skills and confirm you meet the requirements
- Learn about your attitude and character: willingness to learn, reliability, ability to follow instructions.
- Determine which candidates would be the best fit for the job **and** the company.

○ **Tip:** Most employers do not follow up with candidates who have not been selected.



Core Skill: Taking Initiative

The ability to take initiative is highly valued by employers. It is not always easy, but it is a skill you can develop! Initiative is connected to having a good work ethic, problem-solving skills, self-awareness, the ability to work without supervision, and teamwork skills.

DEFINITION:

Taking initiative means recognizing opportunities to contribute, solve problems, or improve situations without waiting for instructions

Doing something that needs to be done without being told



Good Examples of Initiative

- Requesting a meeting with your supervisor, a coach, etc
- Asking for feedback or clarification
- Offering to help your teammates when you have time
- Doing research and learning to build your skills
- Researching a company before an interview
- Offering possible solutions to a problem
- Actively participating in meetings
- Preparing ahead of time for meetings
- Writing a customized cover letter and resume



Bad Examples of Initiative

- Asking questions without checking if you already have the answer first
- Starting things without coordinating with your team
- Waiting until the last minute to ask questions or ask for help
- Doing things you don't have permission to do
- Investing significant time or money into something that hasn't been approved
- Taking time away from your designated tasks to work on something else
- Acting without considering the consequences

Things to Consider

1 Evaluate your skills

Do you have the necessary knowledge and skill to do this? (This might include knowledge of any relevant policies and procedures.)

2 Consider potential risks

Is there any risk of hurting yourself or your colleagues? Could you damage company property or reputation?

3 Think about your team

Will your actions will directly impact your colleagues and their work? You may need to coordinate or communicate with them first. Ensure you are not criticizing or being overly aggressive.

4 Know your role and expectations

Are you inappropriately stepping beyond your role into someone else's? Are you meeting your essential job duties before taking on something additional?

“ Taking initiative isn't just about being proactive—it's about being thoughtful and strategic in the actions you take. It's important to balance taking action with understanding when it's appropriate to seek guidance or clarification. ”

- Jaime McLeod, Manager of
Community Development, Kinbridge



Core Skill: Reliability



Reliability in work and volunteering means that people can trust you to

**do what you say you will do,
do it well, and
do it on time.**

It means coming to work on time, completing tasks without constant reminders, and being consistent in your efforts.

Why is it important?

Reliability is one of the most important soft skills for an employee, especially in entry-level jobs. Employers want to know that they can trust you to come to work when expected and do your job well.

Remember that Canadian workplace culture is very time-based, so punctuality is an important aspect of being reliable.

Demonstrating your reliability

- Volunteer at an organization regularly and consistently.
- Always communicate if you are going to be late, need to leave early, or miss an appointment.
- Manage your schedule so that you can honour your commitments.
- Reply to emails or voicemails.

Top skills employers want

1. Communication
2. Dependability
3. Ability to work with little supervision
4. Teamwork and interpersonal skills

Source: EmployerOne Survey 2024, Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

Employment Scams

Employment scams are unfortunately very common. Scammers might be trying to get money from you or steal your personal information for identity theft. With AI tools, scams are getting more complicated and sophisticated.

Scammers often target people who are desperate for a job and don't know Canadian norms, systems, or laws.

Warning signs of scams:

- Communication by text, Whatsapp or other channels besides email/phone, or Indeed chat
- “Interviews” over chat or on an unknown platform other than Zoom, Teams or Webex (search for the platform to see if it's reputable)
- Asking for sensitive information (SIN, date of birth)
- Asking for a screening or registration fee
- Offering services you didn't ask for and charging a fee
- Offering an interview or a job that you didn't apply for
- Urgency and aggressiveness – demanding immediate responses
- Asking you to purchase items and claiming you'll be reimbursed
- Asking you to do a “trial shift” to demonstrate your skills
- Unusually high wage for an entry-level job



Always do your research!

For more information:

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/job-scams>

Useful Resources

This was just an introduction to these topics! Continue your learning and develop your skills by using some of these resources below, joining our workshops, or accessing employment services.

Indeed Career Advice

[Indeed.com/career-advice](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice)

Workforce Planning Board

[FindYourJob.ca](https://www.findyourjob.ca)

Greg Langstaff (Follow on LinkedIn)

[Linkedin.com/in/GregLangstaff/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/GregLangstaff/)

LinkedIn

[LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com), [LinkedIn.com/Learning](https://www.linkedin.com/learning)

Waterloo Region Community Legal Services

[WRCLS.ca](https://www.wrcls.ca)

Volunteer Waterloo Region

[VolunteerWR.ca](https://www.volunteerwr.ca)

Immigration Waterloo Region

[ImmigrationWaterlooRegion.ca](https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca)

Additional Resources

<https://www.cowancareercoaching.ca/resources-to-get-you-started>



Tip: You can access LinkedIn Learning and many other resources for free from your library account!



Newcomer Employment Outreach

Contact:

info@kinbridge.ca

519 624 3855

200 Christopher Dr, Cambridge ON

Kinbridge.ca

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