

JOB SEARCH GUIDE

The University of Akron



The University of Akron
Career Center

Student Union 211

(330) 972-7747

<http://www.uakron.edu/career>

Connecting You to Your Career Success

The University of Akron is an equal education and employment institution

You Are Looking for a Career, Not Just a Job?!

Did you know the typical working career is 10,000 days?

As you begin your career search, ask yourself these important questions;

- What skills, knowledge, and abilities would you enjoy using, every day, for 10,000 days of your life?
- At the end of those 10,000 days, when you look back at your career, what do you hope you have accomplished?

You are seeking a career, not just a job. A job is anything you do for a paycheck. A career is a direction in life that matches your goals, values, skills, abilities, and knowledge. Searching for a job within your career requires time and planning. **Suggested tasks and time frames are provided for each step of your career search in this guide.**

Make Your Career Job Search a Priority: Start at least Five Months Before Graduation

*Starting your career search takes dedication and advanced planning. According to recent research, **on average it takes 4.3 months to find a full-time career related job** (Challenger, Grey, and Christmas, 2008). If you are not able nor willing to dedicate significant time each week for your job search, it will take you longer. Here is a checklist to get you started:*

Set a schedule:

On your calendar, create time in your weekly schedule for your career search. Think of this time as a “Career Class” and set aside time as you would for any other class or work. Protect that time. Do not allow other tasks to intrude.

ASK, REFLECT:

Answering the following questions can guide you in your career search:

- What would be your ideal career or job?
- What are the key skills, abilities, and knowledge that you would like to use in your career?
- Do you most enjoy working with people, ideas, data, or things?
- If you have work experience, what did you like most about it? What did you like least?
- What type of work environment do you prefer (Office? Outdoor? Interactive? Quiet?)?
- Geographically, where would you like to work?
- If you are unable to find a job in your ideal career path, what is your backup plan? How can your “Plan B” help you to get to your “Plan A?”
- What other factors do you need to consider in your career search: Significant other? Family responsibilities? Financial needs? Health needs? Other?

Know, Gather Information:

- What do you know about jobs in your career path?
- What is a typical entry-level job?
- What types of organizations hire within your career?
- What is the demand for that career in the geographic region you want to work?
- What are typical starting salaries in your career field and geographic region?
- Contact someone doing the work you would like to do, and set up a 30 minute in-person or phone Informational Interview. See the Informational Interview handout from the Career Center for more details.

Do the Paperwork:

- Prepare your resume.
- Draft a cover letter.
- Draft a list of references (see information below on references).
- Read in detail the job descriptions within your career field. Know and understand what experience, skills, knowledge, attitudes, and abilities employers are seeking in candidates for your career field. How are you conveying in each application that you have what an employer needs?

Where are all the jobs?

*While there are some exceptions, you will typically start your job search **at least five months before your graduation.** The exceptions are Accounting (all recruiting is typically in the fall), Education (the bulk of recruiting is late spring and throughout the summer) and many Government agencies (begin recruiting in the fall)*

Why? It's all about the process and the timing. The process is how long it takes an organization to complete their recruiting. Timing is a bit of luck ... seeing jobs available in your career field at the time you are seeking employment. **Since the process usually takes 4.3 months, and on average you will receive one interview offer for every ten applications, you need to give yourself ample time and apply to many places in order to land a job.**

You will want to use a wide variety of resources to find potential career opportunities. Relying on only one job search method limits your ability to find all of the available job opportunities that fit your career goals.

Do you know which sources are most likely to help you find a job?

| Ways to Hunt For and Find a Career Job | Potential Success Rate The percentage of job seekers who find a job using this job search method |
|--|---|
| Doing a "life-changing job hunt," that starts with extensive self-reflection on what you want to do, where you want to do it, and how you will find the jobs. | 86% |
| Successfully completing an internship with a potential employer. | 65-80% |
| Using the yellow pages, Chamber of Commerce, United Way agency list, or Better Business Bureau listings to identify places you might like to work, calling the potential employer, and asking if they are hiring for the work you do well. | 69-84% |
| Knocking on the door of any employers that interest you, even if they do not have advertised open positions. | 47% |
| Using a college career center, or asking everyone you know for job leads. | 33% |
| Using private employment agencies or search firms. | 5-28% |
| Answering ads in local newspapers. | 5-24% |
| Taking a civil service exam. | 12% |
| Asking a former teacher or professor for job leads. | 12% |
| Using only the internet. | 4-10% |
| Randomly mailing out resumes to employers. | 7% |

Source: Boiles, R.N. (2009). *What Color is Your Parachute?* Ten Speed Press: Berkeley, CA.

Other EFFECTIVE Sources for Job and Career Leads

Your Network:

Your odds of finding a job increase the more you develop and use your network of career connections. Did you know that it is estimated that 80-85% of job opportunities are not advertised? To tap into that “hidden” well of job opportunities, you need to ask everyone you know to let you know if they hear of any job openings in your career field. Even if that person is not directly connected to your career field, they may know someone, who knows someone, who is looking to hire a talented person like you. Other ways to network include internships, informational interviews, career fairs, professional events or speakers, LinkedIn.com, and talking with faculty about their connections in your career field. Start your networking early to expand and maximize your connections.

The Career Center’s job database:

The Career Center’s job database system posts hundreds of jobs for UA students, and alumni, and includes job listings from other career centers throughout the United States. Through RooLink, you can:

- Post your resume
 - Actively search a database of employers seeking talented Zips
 - Apply for jobs
 - Apply for exclusive interview opportunities with employers coming to UA to recruit Zips
 - Publish your resume for employers to view.
 - Have your resume viewed by potential employers
- RooLink is free to all currently enrolled students, and your account is free. To obtain an account call the Career Center (330-972-7747) and make an appointment with a career adviser.

Government Listings:

Check all levels of governmental job and career listings: local, city, county, state, and federal. The Federal job application process is centralized through USAJobs.gov, but many agencies (FBI, CIA, IRS, Federal Reserve Bank) have their own separate application process found on their own websites. The Career Center has numerous links on our website, as well as information in our career resource library on how to apply for government jobs.

Employers Coming to Campus:

As a UA student/alumni, you have an edge over others in the job search as many employers come to campus to interview candidates. How can you apply for those interviews? Through your RooLink account you can apply for interviews, where employers come to the Career Center to interview UA students and alumni for potential employment. Employers often host “pre-interview” informational sessions the night before the interview, which also gives you the opportunity to learn more about that organization’s career opportunities. Need an account on the The Career Center’s job database? Contact the Career Center today!

Career Fairs:

The Career Center sponsors two career fairs for all majors (fall and spring semesters) which bring employers to campus to recruit UA students and alumni. There is also an Education Expo for Education majors in the spring semester. When you come to the Career Fair, wear your interview attire, bring your resume, and talk with people in the career field you desire. Remember, ask every organization that may have the type of job or career you are seeking if they are hiring for your career, even if they do not have an opening posted. Employers will take your resume back to their human resources department, and if you impressed them, they will let the organization know you are a good candidate. The Career Center offers career fair preparation advice and consultations; see our website for upcoming workshops or call for an individual appointment.

Professional Associations:

In your chosen career field, there will be at least one professional association. Professional associations connect you with a diverse group of people within your career field. Conferences, job postings, networking opportunities, and keeping up with the current issues of your profession are all benefits of professional memberships. Check out that association’s website for membership information, local meetings, job postings and career data, and date and location of national conferences.

Act, Apply, Organize, Follow-Up:

(At least five months before graduation)

Verify Your References Six Months Before Graduation

Most employers, before they hire you, will want to talk with three to five references who can verify that you will be an effective employee for their organization. Select your references carefully. Your references should be able to speak to your professional abilities or knowledge.

Typically, references are:

- Faculty (current or past)
- Supervisors (current or past)
- Someone who has worked with you in a professional or volunteer setting
- Someone who can speak to your character and integrity

References are not:

- Related to you, good friends, nor significant others
- Selected because they are well-known, famous, or a “big name,” especially if this well-known person cannot truly speak to your work qualifications or abilities

It is very important that before you list someone as a reference, you ask that person if she or he is willing to serve as a good reference for you. Make an appointment (in person or by phone) with each of your references, send them an updated copy of your resume, and let them know the type of jobs to which you are applying. Follow up with a thank you note after talking with your references and also after you obtain a job. See the interviewing handout for an example.

Once you have your references confirmed, list each reference’s full name, title, organization, mailing address, phone, and E-mail on a separate reference page, and send your reference list when requested.

Research Potential Employers: Throughout Your Job Search

Once you have applied for career opportunities, you need to research potential employers before you have an interview. There are three main reasons why it is essential to take the time to do your research:

1. Information is power. Knowing as much as possible about the potential employer will give you a broader perspective about the organization, questions to ask during your interview, and ideas for how you can make a difference to their organization.
2. Employers expect you know about their organization. If you show up to an interview and ask questions that could have been easily answered by doing simple research about the company, you convey to that employer that you did not care enough about this job to take the time to prepare for the interview.
3. Better decisions come from having information. If you do your research, and you are offered a job with the company, you will have more information on which to base your decision when accepting or considering a job offer.

As you find jobs that match your career goals, apply!

Using file folders or computer files, track your applications. Two weeks after you apply, follow up with a phone call (unless they say “no calls!”) to check if they received your materials, and ask when they will begin the interview process. If you cannot find a specific person to contact, call the Human Resources office. Be timely in any requests for references, interviews, or additional information. Frequently check your E-mail, voice mail, and U.S. mail.

What kind of information should you research about potential employers?

For-profit organizations:

- Are they wholly owned or a subsidiary of a larger company?
- Private or publicly held?
- What is their main service or product?
- Where are they headquartered?
- How large are they (in corporate measures)?
- How long have they been in operation?
- What was their financial picture last quarter? Over the past five years?
- Have they increased or decreased the number of employees in the past year?
- Who are the chief operating officers?
- Are there any news items related to this company? (e.g. new products, recognitions, legal actions, etc.)
- Who are their main competitors?
- What is the reputation of the organization?

Nonprofit organizations:

- Are they independent or connected with a larger organization?
- What service does this organization provide?
- Who do they exist to serve?
- Where are they located?
- How many paid employees do they have?
- How many volunteers do they have?
- Is there a board of directors? If so, who serves on the board?
- When and why was this organization founded?
- Over the past five years, what is the financial health of the organization?
- Who are the key leaders?
- Are there any news items related to this organization? (e.g. new services, awards received, legal actions, etc.)
- What is the reputation of this organization?

How to research a potential employer:

- Start with the organization's website or publications
- The Career Center's job database gives information on specific organizations
- Standard & Poor, Fortune, SEC filings (edgaronline) or other corporate rankings
- Google
- Better Business Bureau listings
- Chamber of Commerce or regional development directories
- Trade magazines
- United Way listings (for non-profits)
- Faculty

Interview and Polish: On-going Throughout Your Job Search

When invited to interview with an organization, be sure to ask about the type of interview you will have, who you will be interviewing with, how long the interviews will last, and what information they need you to bring. Be your professional best for interviews. Be aware that the organization is looking for someone who best "fits" their work team, organization, mission, values, and goals. You are also looking for a good "fit" with an organization that will provide a good experience for your career growth. Be sure to send thank you notes following all interviews.

For more details on interviewing, or to schedule a practice interview, contact the Career Center. Be sure to also check out the Career Center's Interview Guide, or visit our web site and sign-up for a Perfect Interview account. This is an on-line interviewing model that you can use to supplement your interviewing skills.

Job Search Etiquette

As you conduct your job search, you want to convey that you have the professional skills and abilities to interact with colleagues, clients, customers, and bosses in a work environment. Take a moment to review some important etiquette strategies:

Phone and Voice Mail

- When you call an employer, identify yourself by your full name and your reason for calling.
- Every time you reach a voice mail, leave your full name and give your phone number slowly or repeat it twice.
- Know what you want to ask before calling.
- Call early in the morning or late in the day to increase your chances of reaching the person you are calling.
- Once you reach someone, always explain why you are calling and ask if it is a good time to talk.
- If the employer says “no calls,” don’t call.
- Do not call repeatedly, act huffy if you do not get the person you are calling, or in other ways become an annoyance to a potential employer.
- On your own voice mail message for those who call you, clearly state your first and last name so that the employer knows they have reached the correct person.
- Avoid using funny, inappropriate, music-laden voice mail greetings for your own voice mail.
- Answer your cell phone professionally if you have listed it as your phone contact on your resume or applications.
- Turn off your cell phone before your interview.
- If you forget to turn off your cell phone in an interview, apologize, and turn it off immediately. Do not answer.
- Be professional in all of your contacts with potential employers.

On-line

- Google yourself to see what is out there about you.
- If you have a Facebook or other social networking account, delete any pictures or information that may convey a lack of maturity or good judgment.
- Set your social networking account to “private” for all parts of your profile so only those you allow may view your information.
- If the organization has an on-line job application, follow the instructions carefully.
- Except for some government job applications, you should never provide your social security number in an on line system or application. Employers should not need this information until you are hired, or until you are a strong final candidate.
- Consider checking your credit rating, if you have not yet done so. Follow-up immediately if there are errors in your report. Some employers will include credit reports in their background checks.

E-mail and Mail

- Always use a “Dear Mr./Miss/Ms/Mrs./Dr. Lastname” greeting and professional format with your E-mails.
- Carefully check your spelling and grammar, use full sentences (not text slang); your E-mail displays your professional communication.
- Verify the correct spelling of names or job titles before sending mail, E-mail, and cover letter.
- Use a concise and descriptive phrase for the subject line of your E-mail (e.g. Job Title, Your Name, Application).
- Keep your E-mail short and to the point if you are attaching a cover letter.
- If you are not attaching a cover letter, the body of your E-mail can be your cover letter.
- Include your name, phone, address, and contact information in your E-mail.
- Use your name as the filename for all attachments (e.g. your-name_resume).
- Respond quickly to any request for information.
- Send a thank you note after each interview addressed individually to each person with whom you interviewed.
- Do not use all uppercase letters or bold, as this is considered SHOUTING.
- Avoid using an unprofessional sounding E-mail address like “purplejoe@gmail.com.”

In Person:

- Smile, make eye contact, introduce yourself with your full name, and offer your handshake to every person you meet.
- Repeat the name of the person you meet, asking for correct pronunciations if needed.
- Thank the receptionist or administrative assistant who arranged your interview schedule or who greets you in the office.
- Ask about that person’s work and how they enjoy working at that location.
- Be clean, groomed, dressed professionally.
- Use body language and attire that convey you have the maturity and confidence to do the job.
- Ask for a copy of each person’s business card, then follow up with thank you notes.
- Any time you meet a potential employer, you should be dressed professionally, even if you are just dropping off your resume.
- Avoid too much perfume or cologne/aftershave.
- Be positive in your answers and interactions, which means avoiding complaints or criticisms or negative comments as answers to questions.

Salary Negotiation: Once You Are Offered the Job

During the job search process, you should not ask about salary, compensation, or benefits before being offered the job.

Be prepared for this salary conversation and do your research on the average salaries offered for the jobs in your career field. The Career Center has starting salary data for most majors from both The University of Akron graduates and the National Association of Colleges and Employers. You can also check salary.com for average salaries and cost of living calculators to compare salaries in different cities and states.

Once you are offered the job, there are seven key points to remember:

1. Employers will pay you a fair wage for your work. The salary you are offered is not random, it is based on economic factors like demand for your skills, number of graduates with your degree in the job market, your previous experiences, and what value you may add to the organization.
2. Some jobs will have a non-negotiable starting salary and benefits.
3. Many employers, especially for-profit employers, will be willing to negotiate with you.
4. Salary is not the best measure of a good job, nor how well a job fits your future career goals.
5. Cost of living is an important factor to consider if you are moving away from the Akron area.

The “dance” of the salary negotiation typically goes like this:

Employer: What are your salary expectations?

Applicant: What do you typically pay someone in this job with my education and experience?

Employer: What compensation do you think would be fair for someone with your education and experience?

Applicant: I know that the average starting salary range for people with my degree and experience is \$xx,000 to \$xx,000.

At this point, the employer will typically give a specific salary amount. A typical counteroffer is 10-15% higher (that is a reasonable amount for budget negotiations). If your counteroffer is within the employer’s budget, the employer may counteroffer with an amount that splits the difference between the original offer and your counteroffer. At this point, the negotiation is often win-win for both the applicant and the employer and a salary agreement is made. If the employer is not able or willing to negotiate, you can ask about other benefits.

Be sure to discuss all benefit options at the point you are negotiating your salary – health care, dental, vision, parking, education or professional development, vacation days, commuter passes, and retirement – it is the total compensation package that you want to focus on, not only the salary.

Managing Job Offers

As you go through the job search process, you may find yourself torn between job offers from multiple employers. How will you decide what job is the best opportunity for you? From the list below, prioritize what is most important to you:

- Feeling like I am making a difference
- Using the skills or knowledge I most enjoy using
- Using my best or strongest skills
- Salary/Benefits
- Location
- Opportunity for advancement
- Security
- Work that varies day-by-day
- Work that is fairly routine day-by-day
- Work hours that are flexible
- Work hours that are predictable
- Quality of life
- Work Environment/Organizational Culture
- Opportunity to work with people I would enjoy
- Other: _____

How do you gracefully turn down a job offer?

If you receive a job offer you will not be accepting, you need to decline that offer professionally. Who knows; you may one day in the future apply to that organization again for a job.

When you decline a job offer, you should do so in person, by phone, or by e-mail, not voice mail. Thank the person for the offer. Let them know how much you appreciated the offer, that you had a difficult decision, but you decided to accept (or search for, if you have not accepted another job offer) a position that was a better fit for your career goals. Wish them much success in finding the best candidate. Tell them you look forward to possibly working with them in the future.

What are the ethics of accepting job offers?

Once you accept a job offer, you are ethically bound to uphold that promise to work for that organization. Even if a “better” offer comes your way. If you have signed a contract, you not only have an ethical obligation but a legal one as well.

When you accept a job offer, your job search has ended. Take the time to withdraw your application from other places to which you applied. That is a thoughtful step that employers appreciate.

And be sure to let the Career Center staff know your good news!

Follow-up with details: Things to remember throughout your job search

1. **Be Persistent, Make the Time:** The job search is often exciting, frustrating, tedious, discouraging, invigorating, and life-changing, all at the same time. Effective career searchers know that direction, dedication, planning, persistence, preparation, research, and follow-up will lead you to your chosen career path.
2. **Take Responsibility For Your Career:** Choosing your career path, finding jobs, researching organizations, interviewing, choosing the job that will lead you to your long-term career goals, and seeking experiences in the job to grow and develop professionally are all your responsibility. Give your job search your full effort to maximize your career options.
3. **If You Accept a Job/Internship Offer, Remember to Cancel All Other Interviews:** Once you accept a position, you have an ethical obligation to withdraw yourself from consideration for any other positions.
4. **Let the Career Center Know You Have a Position:** If you accept a position, let your career adviser know the good news and complete the UA survey at www.uakron.edu.ccm.

Take Advantage of All University of Akron Career Resources

Other career resources on campus include:

- **Bierce Library**
The University of Akron's main library has a wide variety of career resources available.
<http://www3.uakron.edu/ul/subjects/careers.html>
- **Counseling Center:**
If you are having difficulties narrowing your career direction to one or two areas, make an appointment with the friendly staff in the Counseling Center. They are located in Simmons Hall 306, their phone number is 330-972-7082, and their website is www.uakron.edu/counseling
- **Your Faculty and Academic Department:**
Your faculty members are experts in their field of study, and have connections with practitioners, alumni, and others. Ask your faculty for tips on possible job leads.

Go Forth and Get That Job ...

Need more information on anything related to your job search? Stop by or contact the Career Center. We are here to help connect you with your career goals!

Career Center

The University of Akron
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“Great minds must be ready not only to take opportunities, but to make them.”

–Colton