

JSST

Job Seeking Skills Training Guidebook

Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities



OOD JSST Curriculum and Guidebook Introduction

Welcome to Job Seeking Skills Training! It is one of the first and most important steps to take as you work towards finding the right job. The goal of this service is to learn about how to find a job. There are many parts of a successful job search, and we hope to effectively address as many of them as possible.

If you are an Ohioan with a disability reading this document and are not yet connected with the services of Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), please visit [OODWorks.com](https://www.oodworks.com) to learn more about what services OOD provides.

Use this guidebook while working with your assigned OOD Vocational Rehabilitation Staff member. With your OOD staff, determine which sections are especially important for you to review. Discuss those sections; you may be able to use software that allows you to share your computer screen (such as Microsoft Teams). Throughout the guidebook, there will be links to resources. Click on them to open a browser window that will display a resource that will help you dive deeper into the related subject.

There are six key sections to the curriculum. Each one provides you with either knowledge, skills, or materials that will lead to a successful job search.

First, you will take inventory of all the things that make you an appealing candidate to employers. By learning about yourself, you can quickly identify strengths as well as areas for improvement when it comes to looking for work.

Next, you will put those skills to work for you by developing a resume that will effectively market you to employers. We've received a lot of feedback from employers over the years, and have used it to develop resume standards that, if followed, will help ensure you are representing yourself in as positive a manner as possible.

Third, the subject of how disability and employment intersect will be reviewed. Discussions about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), essential functions, and reasonable accommodations will be held. The intention is that you will be equipped to request reasonable accommodations, if necessary, in an appropriate manner.

After that, it is time to tie it all together! How do you find and apply for jobs? Which of the resources that you have prepared are best to use in specific situations?

As you connect with employers, it will be important to be able to communicate with them appropriately. There's no need to panic! The fifth section of this guidebook will review the best ways to talk to employers and will also address how to be prepared for the dreaded job interview. The logistics and details of how to accept a job, with the support you need in place, can seem scary. We will handle that together.

Finally, we will review what to keep in mind when starting a job, with an eye on keeping the job permanently. What can be done to be prepared to meet an employer’s expectations each day? What support is available to you, as a participant in OOD’s services?

By the time you complete this document, you will have completed the following items needed to finish up with “Tier 1” of Job Development:

Job Seeking Skills Training

A resume approved by your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

A sample application (if requested)

A Job Development Plan

Registration with Ohio Means Jobs

Following completion of this curriculum, you will schedule a “kick off” meeting with your counselor, job developer, and anyone else who supports you in your job search in order to finalize the first Tier in the job development process.

Thank you for participating in Job Seeking Skills Training. Let’s get started!

How to use this document

This curriculum guidebook is most effective when used as a team. VR Staff and participants should collaborate to complete it together. Hyperlinks will allow staff to go deeper into a specific subject with participants if it is deemed necessary. Ideally, VR Staff can open this document and then share their screen with the participant and complete it together. Each link is publicly available on the OOD website.



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Section One – About You



In this section:

1. Your Skills and Qualifications
2. Your Work History
3. Your Network
4. Gaps in Employment
5. Criminal History
6. Professionalism
 - a. Personal Hygiene/Appearance
 - b. Appropriate Attire
 - c. Communication
 - d. Reliability

You are here because you have expressed that you want to find a job that will be a good fit for you. You have met with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who has worked with you to determine an Individualized Plan for Employment. Now it is time to start putting that plan into action!

On this plan for employment, you and your counselor selected an Employment Goal.

What is your Employment Goal? Goal _____

This would not have been chosen as your goal if your counselor did not have reason to believe that you have what it takes to find that sort of work. Let's step back for a moment and consider why this vocational goal is appropriate for you.

Your Skills and Qualifications

In the below lines, write or type what you think makes you qualified to work in your selected vocational goal.

Qualifications

As you review this list with your VR Staff, think for a moment about what it was like while you were coming up with how to talk about why you are qualified. Did you have to think hard to find a good way to say what you were hoping to get across? If not – great! But if you were to be put on the spot, and asked to answer why you are a good fit for a job in your goal area in 30 seconds or less – could you do it well?

Take a few moments to review these hyperlinks to get some ideas of good [transferable skills](#) and [hard skills](#). In the below lines, write down five transferable skills and five hard skills that you have. These can come from the links above or can be what you had written previously.

Transferable Skills

Hard Skills



Elevator Pitch

Let's revisit that idea of being put on the spot and asked about why you are a good fit for the job, with only 30 seconds to explain yourself. What you say in this situation is called an **Elevator Pitch**. If you were on an elevator with someone who could hire you, but you know that as soon as those elevator doors open, you might not see them again, what would you say to them to make them think that you might be worth hiring? Let's tie those hard skills and transferable

skills together into the format of a 30 second speech, coming from you (the job seeker) to an employer. Also, be sure to incorporate any baseline educational requirements that are common in your chosen field, if necessary. Read the speech aloud, and make sure it does not take any longer than 30 seconds. [Use this tool if you need help](#). Below, type or write what you have come up with.

Elevator Pitch

Your Work History

Above, we discussed your skills and qualifications. You may have used years of experience from your work history to demonstrate that you have what it takes to do the job. That is a great way to show employers that you are ready to apply previous skills to a new position. Let's take stock of your work history. When you were referred for Job Seeking Skills Training, you should have been given the Sample Application. If you haven't yet, fill out the [sample application](#), as if you were applying to a job. Review it with your VR Staff Member.

Your Network

While the details of how to look for work will come later, it is important to begin taking stock of not just WHAT you know – as we did above – but also WHO you know. Up to 85% of jobs are found through networking, rather than simply filling out an application. Can you think of a time that you were referred to or made aware of a person or service that has been helpful to you? Many people ask friends or family for recommendations for doctors when they have health needs, or for photographers when they want pictures taken. Why not also ask for recommendations for great places to work? After all, you will be spending quite a bit of time there each week! Use [this worksheet](#) to take stock of your network, and review how you will be approaching each of them to discuss potential employment support or opportunities.

Gaps in Employment

Many events can lead to employment gaps – taking time off work for personal reasons like childcare or health are two very common ones. However, some employers may see substantial employment gaps as a warning sign. There is a lot of room for assumption when you are not equipped to address these gaps. Unfortunately, some employers may assume the worst. Let's look at your work history and its gaps. Below, write or type the reason – the REAL reason – you were not working during that time. Review these with your VR Staff and discuss how you might talk about these gaps in an interview or phone call with an employer in a manner that is both honest and likely to reflect positively upon you.

Reason for Gaps

Criminal History

Many job seekers with criminal records dread questions about their backgrounds. However, having a criminal record does not mean you are unemployable. Monster.com states that 73% of HR professionals surveyed indicated their company conducts criminal background checks on applications, and 46% of their company's initial employment applications have a section about criminal history. That tells us that it is important to be able to address your criminal background. This topic may be uncomfortable – but it is a key step towards being employable.

First, it is important to be aware of what is on your record. If a record has been sealed, it is not necessary to disclose it to employers, as it will not turn up on a background check. Know the dates of your convictions. If an employer only asks about convictions within the past seven years, that may mean you do not need to disclose convictions prior to that. Are they asking about felonies? Then there's no need to disclose misdemeanors.

Second, know how to talk about your record. It is important to not try to hide your record. Employers will eventually find out about your criminal record. It is better to be straightforward from the beginning, rather than giving the impression that you were trying to deceive the

employer. It is good to address the crime before the employer has time to make assumptions about it; however, it is not necessary to defend yourself or give all the details of what occurred.

Do not make excuses for your behavior. Demonstrating genuine accountability, responsibility, and change will improve your chances for success.

Try this template from Monster.com:

“I served [X] years of time at a correctional facility [X] years ago. Here’s what I learned from it [list two to three learning lessons]. ... Here’s how I changed my life [point to two to three tangible (or real life) examples/proof of change]... Here’s how I’ll bring value to your company [mention two to three ways you will contribute]...”

Prepare yourself to address this before an interview. Keep your explanations short and to the point. And again, do not be discouraged; you can still find a fulfilling career and bring value to a company.

Professionalism

Professionalism starts at the moment you decide to start the job search process. A lack of professionalism can cost you an interview, job promotion, and even put you in danger of being terminated. During the interview and starting the job, it is important to understand that professionalism is how you conduct yourself that represent both yourself and the company in a positive way. Here are a few signs that you are displaying appropriate signs of professionalism:

Personal Hygiene/Appearance

Everyone wants to work in a place that is as clean and orderly as possible. The way you present yourself can demonstrate that being pleasant to work with is important to you – or that it is not one of your priorities. Someone with unkempt hair, wrinkled clothes, or body odor who is qualified for a position will almost certainly be passed over in favor of someone with equal qualifications who demonstrates that their hygiene is a priority.

Take stock of your personal hygiene. Is this an area you could improve on? These discussions are not especially easy or pleasant. However, it is better to discuss this now rather than waiting until your supervisor calls you into their office to have a tough conversation. Ask your VR staff – does my hygiene seem to be appropriate? If not, what habits should I begin to address that?



Additionally, consider what is and is not appropriate attire for the job you are applying for when meeting with employers or attending interviews. Discuss this with your VR staff member.

Appropriate Attire

Before you are hired, the employer will interview to better understand your background, skills, and if you are a great fit for the company. During the interview, whether it is face to face or over video conference, appearance plays a part in how others view you and your level of professionalism.

What you wear to a job interview is almost as important as what you say in the interview, so it is essential to dress appropriately.

Communication

The ability to communicate with superiors, coworkers, and customers is essential, no matter what industry you work in. A few tips that can help with your communication are below:

- Listen - Being a good listener is one of the best ways to be a good communicator.
- Ask Questions – Asking questions can help make sure you understand what is being asked will help reduce mistakes and show the employer that you want to learn and do a good job. Anytime something is not clear, asking questions is always a great option.
- Body Language – Body language includes eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice. Even if these are not strong areas for you, working on these skills will always produce positive results.

Reliability

Being reliable means that you do what you promised to do and that others can count on you. If you are ever wondering if you display dependability, ask yourself these questions: Do I get my work done on time? Do I respond to requests on time? Do I show up to work on time and leave at my scheduled time off? These few questions can put you on the right path to showing your professionalism and lets your employer know they can count on you.

The way you appear and behave in an employment setting can send a number of different messages to hiring managers and coworkers. In fact, employees who demonstrate professionalism in the workplace are often seen as more valuable. It is also important to recognize that nearly every individual can work to improve in this area.

Success looks different for everyone, but practicing proper professionalism in the workplace can get you far regardless of your ultimate goal. If you honor your work commitments and remain dedicated, productive, and respectful of those around you, building a respectable reputation within your organization will happen naturally.

Section Two – About the Resume

In this section:

1. **Creating a Resume**
2. **Creating a Cover Letter**

Creating a Resume

The most well-known job-seeking tool is the resume. It is used in almost every job search. It is the document most commonly requested of job seekers by employers. When an employer looks at your resume, you have the opportunity to make your case for why they might want to hire you. Very rarely do job offers come from a resume review alone; but an appropriate resume – one that draws a direct line from what the employer is looking for to what you have done and can do – will dramatically increase your chances of being invited to interview.



What makes for a good resume? Let's take a look at [OOD's resume standards](#). This document has been developed in response to years of feedback from employers. Using it, let's start building your resume. Your employment history will be listed on the sample application that you have previously completed. Another resource to use is [Creating a Resume Fact Sheet from OOD](#).

Creating a Cover Letter

While many jobs do not require a cover letter, it is always best to include one if given the option. The cover letter is a justifiable opportunity to “brag” about your accomplishments and separate yourself from the competition. This may make some uncomfortable but promoting yourself is one of the necessary pains of job hunting.

While most have a vague idea of how a cover letter should look, we have a simple three-step approach for the process of writing a cover letter. We call it the “Three Cs” process. An impactful cover letter will:

- **Connect the Dots** between your goals and the organization to which you are applying.
- **Customize** your letter to demonstrate why you are a good fit for the specific position.
- **Close strong** to leave the employer wanting to learn more about you.

Connect the Dots

This may require some research! One way to set yourself apart from other candidates is to connect the dots between the info you have about the employer and why you want to work there. This is good information to include in the first paragraph of the body of your letter. Visit the employer's website to research the company's mission statement and values. You can use this information to open your cover letter, explain to the employer that you are interested in working for them because of something you learned from their website. For example, if the website mentions that the employer provides time for employees to volunteer during work hours, then you could express that you are looking for a workplace that gives back to the community. You can also connect the dots for the employer if your reason for applying to that organization is not obvious. For example, you can state that you are planning to move if the employer is not in your city.

Customize

Customization is extremely important when writing a cover letter. Align your education and/or work experience with their needs using keywords from the job description. Remember, this is your time to talk specifics. While it's perfectly acceptable to have a couple of universal statements regarding your skills, your cover letter must never be considered a "one size fits all" document. The cover letter is also a great place to include applicable numbers and data. For example, if an employer is searching for someone with particular experience, you could mention your previous success rate in that area. Noting quantifiable successes will certainly make you stand out as a star candidate!

Close Strong

First AND last impressions are critical. Finish strong. Your closing should include a brief recap of relevant skills (connecting those dots again) and how they will be useful in that position. Make sure to highlight transferrable skills that will aid your success in a new role, especially if you are a new graduate or changing careers and lacking experience.

It is also acceptable to acknowledge if you have a desire to learn from existing talent at the company. In other words, walk the fine line of being "braggy" without coming off as arrogant and/or inflexible. It is good for employers to know you are willing to learn and have some level of humility. Lastly, end the letter by thanking them for consideration and the hopes to discuss the position further. Do not feel compelled to end with a generic statement like: "Please feel

free to reach out to schedule an interview”. The employer knows you want an interview and have your contact information. You have said all there is to say; now, play it cool.

Section Three – About Disability

In this section:

1. **Essential Functions and Reasonable Accommodations**
2. **Disclosure of Disability**
3. **What Employers Cannot Ask**
4. **What Employers Can Ask**

Throughout your job search, you will often be asked the question: **Are you able to perform the essential functions of this position, with or without a reasonable accommodation?** It is important to fully understand what employers are asking when they say this – both from a legal and practical perspective.

Essential Functions and Reasonable Accommodations

Essential job functions are the major job tasks that any person in the position must be able to do. A cashier is responsible for accepting payment from customers. A custodian is responsible for cleaning their assigned floors or rooms. A call center agent may be responsible for relating a script to clients or callers. Employers are the party responsible for determining what is and is not an essential function. When you are asked if you can perform the essential functions, how will you know what to answer? Several resources can inform your response.

Job Description

Many employers – especially larger ones – will provide candidates with a job description at the interview. They may review the essential functions with them directly. Review these tasks. Can you do them? [Let’s look at an example of a job description from this list](#), that is considered within your goal area. Are there parts of the job that you cannot perform, at least in the typical way that it is performed? If there are things on the job description that you cannot do in the usual way they’re performed, it might not be time to give up on the job just yet. Remember, you were asked if you can perform the essential functions WITH or WITHOUT reasonable accommodations. Perhaps you can answer yes – as long as you have accommodations.

Reasonable Accommodations

One of the key parts of the above question is... “with or without a reasonable accommodation.” That may lead us to ask – what is a reasonable accommodation? Let’s talk about what that does and does NOT mean.

A reasonable accommodation IS:

1. A modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done during the hiring process.
2. Something that ensures individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity not only to get a job, but successfully perform their job tasks to the same extent as people without disabilities.

A reasonable accommodation IS NOT:

1. Special treatment. It simply allows for equal opportunity to perform the job to the standard required by the employer.
2. Too much work or an inconvenience for an employer. [Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) guarantees Americans with disabilities legal protection and access to reasonable accommodations, with certain limitations.
3. Required unless an employer is made aware of your disability.

That is a lot of technical talk. What are some examples of reasonable accommodations?

1. An employee with severe chronic back pain, who needs to alternate between sitting and standing, uses a desk with adjustable height so that she can either sit or stand as needed.
2. An employee with memory or attention challenges is provided with a checklist of duties to complete by the end of her shift.
3. Screen reading software, such as JAWS, is installed on the computer of a blind employee who needs to be able to share information or navigate screens.
4. A deaf employee uses a notepad or whiteboard to share information with coworkers or customers.

Most of these, as you can probably tell by now, are minor adjustments to a workplace.

Does that mean that employers must do or provide anything you request because you have a disability? No. An employer does not have to provide a reasonable accommodation if doing so would cause undue hardship. Undue hardship means that the reasonable accommodation would be too difficult or too expensive to provide, in light of the employer’s size, financial resources, and the needs of the business. However, an employer may NOT refuse to provide a reasonable accommodation just because it involves SOME cost. An employer does not have to provide the exact reasonable accommodation the

employee or applicant desires. If more than one reasonable accommodation works, the employer may choose which one to provide.

For more details on job reasonable accommodations, including lists of potential reasonable accommodations by disability type, visit AskJan.org. Especially useful is their [reasonable accommodation toolkit](#).

Disclosure of Disability

Starting a conversation with an employer about your disability might seem to be one of the most awkward conversations you will have in your life. Fortunately, it does not have to be! There are a lot of tools and resources that will help you talk about your disability and reasonable accommodations. Keep in mind that it is very important to disclose your disability IF you need a reasonable accommodation. As [AskJan](#) states:

“Under the ADA you can request an accommodation at any time during the application process or while you are employed. You can request an accommodation even if you did not ask for one when applying for a job or after receiving a job offer. So when should you disclose that you have disability? In general, you should disclose your disability when you need to request a reasonable accommodation - when you know that there is a workplace barrier that is preventing you, due to a disability, from competing for a job, performing a job, or gaining equal access to a benefit of employment like an employee lunch room or employee parking.”

Consider that employers are not liable to provide a reasonable accommodation if the disability is not disclosed to them. VR staff are pleased to help equip you with the language needed to effectively disclose a disability. It is important that you are willing to have these conversations with the employer, and that you can build the natural support needed to keep the job permanently.

Work through [this AskJan page](#) with your VR Staff, and discuss how you think you might need to handle these situations.

When in an interview you are asked, “Can you perform the essential functions of this position, with or without a reasonable accommodation?”, all you have to respond is either “yes” or “no”. You don’t have to say, “yes, as long as the reasonable accommodation is provided”, or “no”, with details on why not. As the EEOC states,

“Determining the best moment to tell a prospective employer about the need for reasonable accommodation on the job is a personal decision. Sometimes, applicants are not aware they may need a reasonable accommodation until they have more information about the job, its requirements, and the work environment. Some applicants choose to inform an employer during the application process after they better understand the job and its requirements. Others choose to wait until they have a job offer.”

What Employers Cannot Ask

There are federal and state laws that prohibit employers from discriminating against candidates on the basis of certain qualities that have nothing to do with your ability to do the job. This means that there are certain questions that cannot be asked. With regard to disability, this can include (but is not limited to):

“Do you have a disability?”

“What is your disability?”

“When did you become disabled?”

The knowledge that employers should not ask these questions is important; but it is even more important to know how to respond when this is brought up. These questions being asked can inform you that this **employer** is not well-informed when it comes to disability etiquette and the law. Sometimes these employers may have good intentions but just not be aware; sometimes they have a perspective that demonstrates unwillingness to accommodate people with disabilities, and that would tell you that they may not be a great fit for long-term employment. Your response should take this into consideration. In an interview setting, you need to know what to say. Here are some ideas:

“I don’t feel comfortable answering that question.”

“What I can tell you is that I can perform the essential functions of the job.”

You don’t need to give an employer your entire disability history; all they need to know is whether or not you can do the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation.

What Employers Can Ask

While there are restrictions on what employers cannot ask, employers still reserve the right to ask questions to help them understand your ability to do the job. In the course of honestly answering these questions, a discussion about your disability may arise. [The EEOC states](#):

“Under the law, an employer may not ask disability-related questions and may not conduct medical examinations until after it makes a conditional job offer to the applicant.³ This helps ensure that an applicant’s possible hidden disability (including a prior history of a disability) is not considered before the employer evaluates an applicant’s non-medical qualifications. An employer may not ask disability-related questions or require a medical examination pre-offer even if it intends to look at the answers or results only at the post-offer stage.

Although employers may not ask disability-related questions or require medical examinations at the pre-offer stage, they may do a wide variety of things to evaluate whether an applicant is qualified for the job, including the following:

- *Employers may ask about an applicant's ability to perform specific job functions. For example, an employer may state the physical requirements of a job (such as the ability to lift a certain amount of weight, or the ability to climb ladders), and ask if an applicant can satisfy these requirements.*
- *Employers may ask about an applicant's non-medical qualifications and skills, such as the applicant's education, work history, and required certifications and licenses.*
- *Employers may ask applicants to describe or demonstrate how they would perform job tasks.*

Once a conditional job offer is made, the employer may ask disability-related questions and require medical examinations as long as this is done for all entering employees in that job category.”

For some information about how employers should be handling interviews with people with disabilities, [visit this link at AskEarn](#).

Section Four – About the Job Search

In this section:

- 1. The Job Posting**
- 2. Online Job Advertisements**
- 3. The Hidden Job Market**
- 4. Completing a Job Application**
- 5. Keeping Track of Your Job Search**
- 6. Appropriate and Timely Follow-up**
- 7. Employer Partners**
- 8. OhioMeansJobs**
- 9. Social Media**

At this point, you should be equipped with the materials you need to conduct a job search. Now it is time to put them to use. How can you show employers that you have what they’re looking for? While every employer is different, there are some general best practices that if followed, will put you in a good position to succeed.

The Job Posting

When employers need someone to work for them, how do they find the right person? As we reviewed in the networking section, many jobs are filled from within. Often, these jobs aren't posted online. An appropriate job search will always include more than simply looking for advertised jobs. However, knowing how to effectively find and apply for jobs that are posted online or on a sign is a key skill that will increase your chances of finding appropriate employment.

Some job postings are very detailed; some are not. Sometimes a "Now Hiring" sign posted on a workplace's front lawn is the primary way an opening is advertised. If you are driving past an employer who likely is hiring for a position you are qualified for, this can be a great opportunity. Talk to your VR Staff about how you might be prepared for that. Do you have a folder with copies of your resume and sample application? Are you prepared to give a short elevator speech when you speak with the hiring manager?

When a job is posted online, there might be a ton of great information that will help you be prepared to know what an employer wants from applicants. Before applying, be sure that you meet the minimum education or experience requirements for a position. In addition, some postings may request specific types of job search materials. Some ask for a resume, cover letter, and three references; some might ask only for the resume, or a combination of other materials.

Online Job Advertisements

Much of the modern job search is done online. While face-to-face connection and networking are still key – and should not be neglected in any job search – many employers now, when asked directly if they are hiring, might refer you to the careers page of their website. How then do you find that page? It can be as simple as searching for (Employer name) careers in Google. Sometimes a direct link to the careers page will come up; from there, you can search for positions by job type or location. Try that with your VR Staff now.

A variety of Job Boards have gained prominence as the job search moves online. Employers can post jobs to these sites. The sites then gather your information and allow employers to access it through an online portal. You should be able to enter the type of job you are looking for as well as the physical radius to which you are limiting your job search. Visit [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) and enter your Vocational Goal, and then the city in which you reside in the appropriate fields. Adjust the filters as necessary to ensure you are not wasting time looking at jobs outside your job search radius, or that may not meet other requirements you have. Consider other job boards as well, including [Monster.com](https://www.monster.com), [CareerBuilder.com](https://www.careerbuilder.com), among others. Pay attention to the options you are selecting when making your account. Do you want to receive emails each day with new job

leads, or would this quickly overwhelm your inbox? Look out for what options you are selecting upon account creation.

The Hidden Job Market

While many jobs are obtained through simple online job searches, most – up to 80%, by some estimates – are filled before they are advertised. Many employers use the hidden job market to avoid the lengthy and expensive process of open online applications. When a company has a job opening, they want to fill it as quickly, easily, and inexpensively as possible. In a tough economy, most hiring managers receive hundreds of resumes for each public job opening. Even with strict filters in automated software programs, it can take hours of time for HR professionals and hiring managers to wade through the resumes they receive. Instead of posting a job opening, employers can choose alternatives such as hiring internally, using a recruiting firm or headhunters and relying on **referrals from current employees**.

How do job seekers find these positions? It is especially important to learn about job openings before they're posted by going directly to the source. Job openings can be divided into four stages:

First stage: There is no open job

Second stage: There are no formal openings, but people who are “in the know” are aware that an opening may soon exist

Third stage: A formal opening exists, but it is not advertised

Fourth stage: The position is advertised

If you are appropriately utilizing your network, you will likely be made aware of positions between the second and third stage. Which of your contacts might be able to get you the inside scoop?

Completing a Job Application

When employers look at information from applicants, one of their first steps is to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements. Your materials may be cleanly formatted and clear of grammatical errors or typos – but if your resume does not show how you meet the job's requirements, it is almost impossible that you will be called for an interview. That is why it is important to tailor your resume to each position for which you are applying. Let's look at how to do that.

The minimum qualifications for a position might be listed a few different ways and can be a combination of education, experience, and skill requirements. Let's say a job advertisement lists "Possesses strong communication skills" under its requirements section. While it might be clear that you have strong communication skills as evidenced by your long work history in customer service environments, an employer may not necessarily have the time to determine the context of all of your experience; perhaps communication skills are implied rather than explicitly stated in your resume bullet points. If communication is a key part of your skillset, it should be in your resume's summary. If it is not in your summary – or at least in the bullet points under a specific employer – consider quickly editing your resume to include the exact phrase listed in the job requirements. Not only does this help a HR representative who's scanning resumes, but it will also satisfy the demands of what is known as Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) – computer software that reads resumes and compares them to the job's requirements. For more details on how to satisfy the demands of ATS, [click this link](#).

If a position requires a specific credential, and you do not possess that credential, it may be better not to apply to that position. It is more than likely that your application would simply not be considered. Completing an application may not be a productive use of your time. However, if a credential is only preferred, it is recommended to still complete an application; when doing these applications, it is important to demonstrate that you exceed preferred qualifications in other areas.

Keeping Track of Your Job Search

Over the course of conducting parts of your job search online, you will create dozens of accounts with various websites, including employer sites and job boards. It is key to be able to have a centralized way of keeping track of your passwords, usernames, and applications completed. In the next section, we will learn about how to follow up with employers appropriately. A spreadsheet such as [this one](#) can help you stay organized. Figure out with your VR staff how you might be able to access this – with Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or even a printed version using pen and paper.



Appropriate and Timely Follow-up

Once you start filling out applications, it does not take long before keeping track of all the places you have contacted can become difficult. That is why it is especially important to have a reliable way of tracking the applications you have completed. It is also important that you

utilize this information to follow up with employers. Rather than simply filling out an application and considering that to be enough, let's look at some ways you can encourage employers to give you a real shot through appropriate follow up.

Sometimes, job advertisements will mention who to contact about your application. Were you provided a phone number or email address for Human Resources? Even better, were you given a name? After your application is submitted, a best practice is to make note of that contact information, and one week after your application is submitted, utilize it to follow up. Consult with your job developer, and use the tips found in Section Five, to follow up appropriately.

[Utilize this fact sheet from OOD for more information on how to appropriately follow up.](#)

Employer Partners

OOD has developed relationships with many employers across the state. Some relationships are statewide, and some are location-dependent. The Employer Partner list from your area is a good place to start in your job search and can also be utilized during the course of your job search. Please work with your local TSC to obtain an appropriate list.

These companies have agreed to form a partnership with OOD. This partnership - if used the correct way - can be beneficial to you. Anytime that you apply to one of the Employer Partners the Talent Sourcing Coordinator needs to be notified with an editable copy of your resume along with the company, location, position and date you applied. This will ensure that our Employer Partner takes a second look at your resume.

OhioMeansJobs

OhioMeansJobs is a website that contains a wide variety of resources for job seekers. Since a key part of OOD's mission is to empower Ohioans with disabilities through employment, OOD requires participants in job development to complete registration on OhioMeansJobs. You can begin that process by [clicking this link](#).

Be sure to upload your resume and/or re-create it on OhioMeansJobs. Not only does OMJ have job postings, but it has a wide variety of resources to help you conduct a more effective job search. Utilize their Interview Practice courses, found under "Explore It", then Practice Interviews and Tips. Under "Plan It", then "Assessments and Training", you can complete some assessments that are in some ways similar to what employers might present to you to gauge if you are qualified.

Social Media

Now that much of our interaction with other people is online, many job seekers have personal social media accounts. While having these accounts is fine, it is important to understand what their content may convey to employers. Are you sharing memes with profane language or images? Are you making references to drug or alcohol abuse or criminal activity? Consider making your accounts private, deleting them, or thoroughly removing content that may jeopardize how you are perceived by employers. [Utilize this fact sheet from OOD to learn more about your social media presence.](#)

Section Five – About Employer Contacts

In this section:

- 1. Voicemail Greeting**
- 2. Leaving and Professional Voicemail**
- 3. Professional Email**
- 4. What Your Email Should Look Like**
- 5. How to Schedule an Interview**
- 6. Mock Interview**
- 7. The Real Interview**
- 8. Virtual Hiring**
- 9. Job Development Plan**

Now that you've developed quality materials to present your qualifications to employers, it's time to put them to use. In this section we will break down how to effectively contact employers, review how to follow up on contacts effectively, and provide interview tips and tricks.

Voicemail Greeting

When an employer is ready to move forward with the interview process, the first line of contact will be an email and/or phone call to schedule the initial interview. If you simply cannot pick up the phone, you will want a polished voicemail greeting to let the employer know they have reached the right person.

If you would like to keep things simple, opt for a basic greeting. Most voicemail options allow you to record just your name, which lets callers know they've reached the right person. When recording, choose a quiet area, speak clearly, and use your full name (first and last).

The second option is to choose a voicemail greeting that is short and sweet. An example of this type of greeting can be found below:

*“Hi, you have reached (Your First and Last Name).
Please leave a message and I’ll get back to you soon.
Thanks!”*

A third option is asking the caller to leave a message, an example is found below:

*“Hello, you have reached (Your First and Last Name).
Sorry I wasn’t able to take your call, but please leave your name and a detailed message and I’ll
get back to you.
Have a great day.”*



For an example, please click [here](#) to listen or [here](#) to read a transcript

When you are looking for a job, a good rule of thumb is to answer your phone as often as you can. You never know when an employer might be calling to set up an in-person meeting or conduct a phone interview.

Leaving a Professional Voicemail

An employer called you about a job you are interested in, but you were not able to pick up the phone. They left a voicemail saying they were interested in talking to you about the opportunity and asked you to give them a call back, so you did. Unfortunately, they were unavailable, and now you need to leave a professional voicemail.

Here are 7 basic components to an effective voicemail message:

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Introduce yourself using your first and last name.
- Keep it short.
- Reference what position you are calling about.
- Leave a call-back number.
- Include a good time to reach you.
- End with a ‘thank you.’

For an example, click [here](#) to listen or [here](#) to read a transcript.

Introduce Yourself

Start your message with, “Hi, (*Name of the Person Who Called*), this is (*Your First and Last Name*).”

Reference Why You are Calling

Many employers are trying to hire for multiple positions at once. Help them quickly remember who you are by mentioning what job you are calling about.

“I’m returning your call about the (*Job Title*) position.”

Speak Slowly and Clearly

Any time you make a job-related call, choose a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. When you are leaving a voicemail, background noise can make it hard to hear what you are saying.

Speak clearly and slower than you normally would when leaving your name and contact information. When your voicemail is heard, you want it to be easy for the listener to take down your information without missing the rest of your message.

Leave a Call-Back Number

This is the number one thing people forget to do when leaving a voicemail. It is understandable, since cell phones automatically save call-back information, but you want to make it as easy as possible for the employer to get in touch with you.

You can leave your phone number twice if you want to – once in the beginning of the message, and again at the end.

“You can reach me on my cell phone at (Your Phone Number).”

Include a Good Time to Reach You

If you are in class or at work during normal business hours, leave one or two good times to reach you in your message. This helps the employer coordinate a time where you will be able to have a conversation – which is the goal!

“I’m free today from (Time) to (Time), and tomorrow from (Time) to (Time).”

Keep it Short

A voicemail should not be very long, since you are just letting the listener know you received their call and would like to get in touch with them to discuss the opportunity further. If you get nervous when leaving messages, try practicing your short message a few times before calling. Planning what you are going to say ahead of time will also help minimize any rambling.

End with a “Thank You”

Everyone likes to feel appreciated, and employers are no exception! Common courtesy goes a long way and can help you create a positive first impression. Thank the employer for reaching out to you and reiterate your interest in the opportunity.

“Thanks again for giving me a call about the (Job Title) position, I’m looking forward to learning more about it.”

Professional Email

When you are on the hunt for a new job you will be receiving a lot more emails and phone calls than you normally would. With so much of our communication being digital nowadays, people can form a first impression of you without ever seeing you or hearing your voice. One way that you can present a polished image is by using a professional email address.

How does a professional email address differ from an everyday email account? A professional account uses your first and last name, and, if necessary, a few numbers.

What Your Email Should Look Like

An example of a basic professional email address would be: JessicaJones@gmail.com

An unprofessional or everyday email would look like this: JessicaLuvstoParty1989@gmail.com

If you have a common name and your preferred email address is already taken, there are a few things you can do.

- Try changing domains. *JessicaJones* may be taken on Gmail, but might be free on Yahoo or Outlook.
- Add a number to your email address. *JessicaJones1* and *JessicaJones2018* are both great alternatives.
- Incorporate your middle name or initial. Try *JessicaAJones*, *JessicaJonesA*, or *JessicaAnnaJones*.

Avoid using your birth year in your email address. Even though it is illegal, age discrimination is real – don't hand someone a reason to disqualify you as a candidate.

Having a separate email for job-related communication can help keep your personal inbox clutter-free. It can also ensure that important emails and interview invitations don't get lost in the shuffle. You don't need to commit to your new, professional email address forever – simply use it when you are in the job market, it may be just one tool in your job seeking toolkit, but it is an important one!

How to Schedule an Interview

Your goal as a job seeker should be to schedule for an interview as soon as possible. An interview is a major step towards an offer of employment, and you will not do yourself any favors if you schedule your meeting weeks or months in advance.

If possible, offer to come in and meet with the hiring team within a three-day timeframe. Did you receive a call early in the day? Ask if they'd like to meet with you later that afternoon or the next day. As a candidate, you want to seem eager, interested, and accommodating. The company has something that you want (a job), so you will need to work around their availability. If your personal schedule is tight and you simply cannot make it in that fast, try and take one of the first appointments that the employer offers.

If you receive an email inviting you to set up a time for a call or interview, try to respond before the end of the business day, or within 24 hours (at the most). You don't want to give the employer the chance to choose another candidate. Taking too long to respond could cause you to lose the opportunity.

Questions you want to ask yourself when setting up the interview:

- Do I need a ride?
- Are there any reasonable accommodations that I need for the interview (Interpreter? Large print paperwork? Lighting?)
- Do I have the address of the interview location? And how long is the commute?
- Have I scheduled an interview prep with my job developer?

Mock Interview

Now that you have had contact with the employer and have scheduled an interview, it is now time to prepare with your job developer with a mock interview. What is a mock interview? A mock interview is a practice interview that helps you learn how to answer difficult questions, develop interview strategies, improve your communication skills, and reduce your stress before an actual job interview.

The questions asked during a mock interview are typically the more general employer interview questions that are asked during a first-round or screening interview.

However, for candidates who know what type of position, career field, or industry they are interested in, job-specific interview questions may be asked.

If you are using a mock interview to prepare for a scheduled job interview, the interviewer may ask you actual questions that are asked by hiring managers at the company.

For example, if you are searching for a janitorial job, the interviewer can ask a series of janitorial interview questions to familiarize you with the types of questions that will be asked and to help you frame good responses.

Here are a few examples of janitorial job interview questions:

- What types of janitorial machinery and chemical products are you familiar with?
- Can you work around the public when cleaning?
- Can you lift heavy things and stand for long periods of time?
- What steps would you take if you noticed a problem that required major repairs?

How to Prepare for a Mock Interview

Be sure to take your mock interview as seriously as you would an actual interview. Get ready for the interview just as you would for an interview with a hiring manager:

- Arrive 10 - 15 minutes early and bring your resume and any other materials you would bring to a real interview.
- Bring a notebook to take notes on what your mock interviewer tells you.
- Dress in professional interview attire.



Mock interviews are an ideal way to practice for real job interviews because you are in a situation that mirrors an actual interview with a company. When you review your interview with the interviewer, you will be able to modify your responses and interview behavior, if necessary.

Take some time with your VR staff to schedule a mock interview. Your staff will give you information on how specifically to be prepared. They may be completing [this form](#) to assess your performance. Are you prepared to get a glowing review?

The Real Interview

After your mock interview is completed, you should be more prepared to attend a real interview. Review your mock interview progress; and utilize the resources on OhioMeansJobs to ensure you are prepared. [Take a look at the OhioMeansJobs “Fast Track” course](#). In addition, utilize this [Behavioral Interview Tip Sheet](#).

One day before the interview, ensure this checklist can be completed:

- Early Arrival. Do you know the address? Do you know how to navigate there? Will you need to pay for parking?
- Professional Appearance. Is my alarm set to give me time to shower and brush my teeth? Are my clothes picked out, cleaned, and ironed?
- Documentation. [Read the I-9 form and ensure that you have what you need to complete it](#). Make sure you have the documentation you need before attending the interview.
- Questions for the employer. Have you researched the employer, and are you prepared with at least three questions to ask them when the time comes?
- Pen and paper. Do I have a way to take notes during the interview?

Be sure to follow up with your job developer immediately after your interview to discuss the next steps, such as sending a follow-up letter or email. Don't forget to get your interviewer's name so you can do some personalized follow-up!

Virtual Hiring



A **virtual interview**, or **video interview**, is a job interview that uses video technology to allow the interview to take place remotely. Rather than meeting face-to-face, the hiring manager and candidate will connect with each other online using video software. Typically, the tools required for this kind of meeting include a computer with a built-in or external video camera and microphone, a reliable internet connection, and headphones if desired.

A video interview often follows the style of a traditional, in-person interview, although there are a few key considerations to keep in mind. [Here is a Virtual Interview Guide that is easy to follow to help you prepare for your virtual interview.](#)

Job Development Plan

The planning phase is almost over! Combining what you have done so far, work with your staff member to complete the [OOD Job Development Plan](#).

Section Six: Being Prepared to Keep the Job

In this section:

1. **Understanding Expectations**
2. **Asking for Feedback**
3. **Be Flexible**
4. **Be Reliable**
5. **OOD Support**

Congratulations on accepting a job offer! Getting and starting a new job is exciting – but even more important is being prepared to be successful once you start. While this guidebook is focused on getting prepared for your job search, it is important to consider how you can set yourself up for long-term success on the job.

Understanding Expectations

Do you remember reviewing the job description in section three? This is often used to create a performance evaluation. Your supervisor should be clear about what is expected of you. If you have any questions about what you are supposed to be doing each day, it is better to ask when you are first getting started, rather than just to guess and hope you are doing the right thing. Ask for a written job description. If one is not available, ask your supervisor for clear details on what your responsibilities are. Then be sure to DO what is expected of you. An employee who can be counted on to get the job done each day is invaluable to employers.

Asking for Feedback

There is no shame in asking for feedback on your performance. Usually, someone will let you know if you need to adjust how you are performing a specific task. However, going above and beyond to clarify that you are doing what you should, and getting answers about questions you have, is key to being set up for long-term success. Discuss any problems with performing the job as the problems arise. Then, cooperate with those around you to address the issue.

Be Flexible

It is likely that when you start a new job, you might know of another way of doing things. Perhaps you got used to how your old job used to track defect parts or log phone calls. However, it is important to be flexible and willing to fit into how the new employer does

things. Give new processes a chance before you dismiss them; show your employer that you want to work as a team and follow instructions for the good of the group.

Be Reliable

If you are hired to work 40 hours each week, it is not unreasonable for your employer to expect you to be at work for 40 hours each week. If your shift starts at 8:00 AM, arrive several minutes before then, so that you can be ready to start doing your job as soon as the clock strikes 8. Do not take days off without a very good reason (contagious illness or death in the family). If your lunch break is 30 minutes, take exactly 30 minutes. If you develop the reputation of being someone who does what they say they'll do, your supervisor will notice. Employers do not want to get rid of employees they can count on.

OOD Support

OOD provides services called On the Job Supports to job seekers who are trying to keep their jobs. There are two categories of this service. The primary service is called Retention. In this service, VR staff will contact you over a 90-day period. At first, they'll contact you and/or the employer (with your permission) weekly, asking for direct feedback on your performance, helping troubleshoot potential issues, and providing guidance on how to handle situations from poor performance to transportation issues, to coping with new physical demands. Some participants qualify for Job Coaching, in which a Community Rehabilitation Provider staff member would accompany you to work, reinforcing the employer's training and helping you learn how to navigate the job's demands as they come. This service should already be on your IPE, but do not hesitate to reach out to your VR Staff once you are hired to ensure you are receiving the amount of support necessary so that you can be set up for long term success on the job.

