



# Table of Contents

## INDIVIDUAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

|                |                                     |    |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Unit 1:</b> | Self-Assessment .....               | 2  |
| <b>Unit 2:</b> | Career Choice Analysis .....        | 6  |
| <b>Unit 3:</b> | Employment .....                    | 9  |
| <b>Unit 4:</b> | Goal Setting .....                  | 11 |
| <b>Unit 5:</b> | Career Essay .....                  | 18 |
| <b>Unit 6:</b> | Resume and Cover Letter .....       | 21 |
| <b>Unit 7:</b> | Interviewing and Applications ..... | 33 |

*Watch your thoughts; they become words.  
Watch your words; they become actions.  
Watch your actions; they become habits.  
Watch your habits; they become character.  
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.*  
--Frank Outlaw

## **Unit 1: Self-assessment**

**Objective:** In this lesson, the participant will:

1. Identify the need for a Career Development Portfolio.
2. Assess their personal career interests by completing a self-assessment interest inventory.
3. Identify career fields indicated as a result of the interest inventory.

**Session Time:** 50 – 60 minutes

**Equipment:** Overhead projector, marker board/chalkboard

**Materials:** SDS Career Explorer Self-Assessment and Career Booklets, transparencies, handouts, 2-pocket folders

**Methods:** Lecture, guided discussion, and independent study

### **Instruction:**

It is a good idea for the instructor to do a career portfolio before attempting to instruct the students to do so. The instructor's portfolio can serve as a sample for the students. Also, the instructor will become familiar with each step of the portfolio. Consequently, any problems with researching careers, training, or funding sources will have been resolved before the students encounter them.

It is important for the instructor to become familiar with the SDS Self Assessment Booklet and Career Booklet. Read through the Teacher's Guide and do the assessment.

Every student needs to develop an Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP) that will guide the student through the process of making informed decisions about their employment goals.

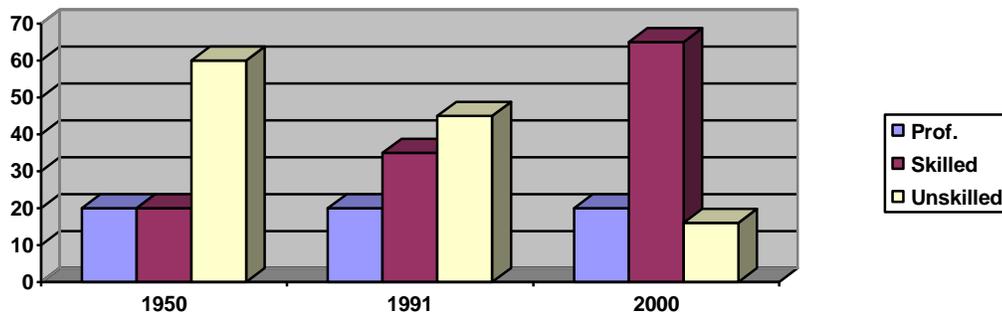
### **ICDP Components:**

- Self-Assessment
- Occupational Outlook Handbook search
- Employer search
- Training search
- Funding search
- Career essay
- Resume/cover letter
- Interview
- Application

Skilled workers continue to be the fastest growing field of workers in the American workforce as indicated by the graph below. Students need to be focusing on gaining skills that will be marketable in the workforce.

Show the transparency of the graph to the class. Discuss how the need for professional workers has remained the same in the last 50 years. Explain how the need for skilled workers has risen from 20 percent to 64 percent. In contrast, the need for unskilled workers has dropped from 60 percent to 16 percent in the last 50 years. Ask the students “According to this chart, which category of workers is less likely to find a job?” Talk about the decline in unskilled labor, and point out that without a plan to enter the workforce with some type of skill their chance of getting a job declines with every year that passes.

**The Changing Needs in the American Workforce**



Bureau of Labor Statistics

Professionals include doctors, lawyers, counselors, executives, etc. Those people holding professional degrees.

Skilled craft workers are employed as precision production operators. They include tool and die makers, power plant operators, mechanics and repairers, including vehicle and equipment mechanics, telephone line installers and repairers, heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics, and heavy equipment mechanics. Other skilled trades are employed in construction (Journeymen).

Semiskilled workers are part of the skilled class on this graph and include machine operators and assemblers who operate stationary machines. These include punching and stamping machine operators, lathe operators, molding and casting machine operators, assembly line welders, printing machine operators, and laundering and dry cleaning machine operators. The second group include operating transportation equipment and include truck drivers, bus drivers forklift drivers and other mobile equipment operators.

Unskilled workers include stock handlers, garbage collectors, hand packagers, and machine feeders.

**Activity:**

Distribute the 2-pocket folders, Self-Assessment Booklets, and Career Booklets. Have the students write their name on the folder. Explain to the students the importance of finding a job that will hold their interest. Also, explain how unhappy they will be if they get into a job that they are not interested in. Some students will say that they already know what they want to do and don't need to do the assessment. Challenge them to do the assessment anyway and see if what they considered to be the career field they want is in line with what the assessment shows. Explain to them that the assessment is like looking into a mirror because it is a reflection on their own responses.

Instruct the students to complete the self-assessment. When they have finished the assessment booklet, discuss the six Holland codes with them and the career fields they picked. Ask the students to give one of the careers they found and create a list from the student responses. Talk about the list and the variety of interest in the class.

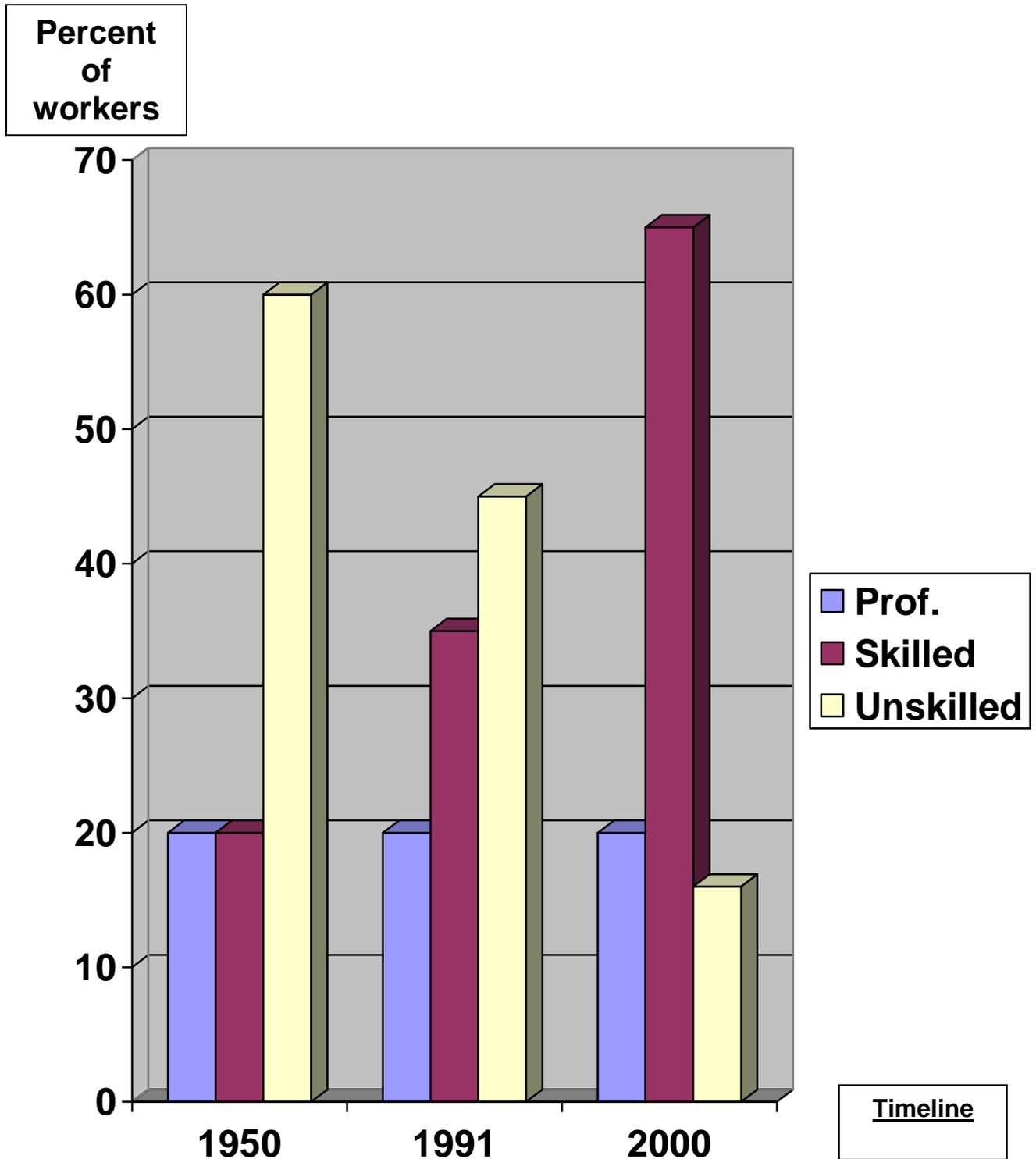
Have the students begin their portfolio by adding the assessment booklets to the folders that they were provided.

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*The self is not something that one finds. It's something one creates.*

- Thomas Szasz

## Changing Needs in the American Workforce



## **Unit 2: Career Search (Career Choice Analysis)**

**Objectives:** In this lesson, the participant will:

1. Research information on three careers from their self-assessment.
2. Analyze the information they gathered about the three careers.
3. Choose a specific career they are most interested in.
4. Research additional information relating to their chosen career.

**Session Time:** 50 – 60 minutes

**Equipment:** Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) (go to <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>), computers with Internet access

**Materials:** Pencils/pens, highlighter, student career portfolio, classified ads, want ads

**Methods:** Guided discussion, Internet research

### **Instruction:**

In the last lesson the students completed a self-assessment and picked careers indicated by their individual Holland code. In this lesson the students will pick the three careers that they are most interested in and research information on those careers. The students will analyze the information and evaluate the three careers to decide which career they will focus on. The students will do further research on their focus career and begin searching for a business/industry or government institution that would hire them for that career.

### **Activity:**

Distribute the student career portfolios and the “Career Worksheet”. Review the results of the self-assessment and the Holland Code with the students. Tell the students to pick three careers from their list in the Self-Assessment Booklet. Instruct the students to search the online Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH, go to <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>) or have copies of the OOH available for the class.

The students should find the information for the three careers of their choice and print/copy the information. The class can use the Career Worksheet to evaluate the information from the three careers. Instruct the students to highlight information from each of the subtitles on the OOH information that they have copied. Using the information they have gleaned from each of their career papers have them rate each area of the three careers they picked. Have the students tally their scores on the worksheet and discuss the careers that have the highest

scores. Were these careers the same careers they picked in lesson 1? Talk to the students about the process they used and have them add the worksheet to their career portfolios.

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*Success is never a destination - it is a journey.*

*Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, my friend, anyone can start from now and make a brand new end.*

*What is the difference between a stumbling block and a stepping stone? - The way you approach it.*

Contributed by Maya Sullivan

# CAREER WORKSHEET

Use the scale to rate each of the three careers.

- 1 – Not so Good
- 2 – Good
- 3 – Great

## CAREER

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ **B** \_\_\_\_\_ **C** \_\_\_\_\_

|   |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| Nature of work                                  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Working Condition                               | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Employment                                      | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Job Outlook                                     | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Earnings  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | _____ | _____ | _____ |

### **Unit 3: Career Search (Employment)**

**Objectives:** In this lesson, the participants will:

1. Research and identify employers for their focus career.
2. Research and identify education/training for their focus career.
3. Research and identify funding for the education/training of their focus career.
4. Compile information and add to the career portfolio.

**Session Time:** 50 – 60 minutes

**Equipment:** Computers with Internet access

**Materials:** Student career portfolio, classified ads, want ads

**Methods:** Guided discussion, demonstration, individual and/or group work

#### **Instruction:**

In the last lesson the students used analysis and evaluation skills to discover a focus career. In this lesson the students will research employers, education/training, and funding sources for their focus career.

This lesson was originally designed for classrooms with Internet capabilities. If there is no online capability in the classroom a field trip to the library may be an answer to get online access. However, career searches were done long before Internet came into the classrooms.

The teacher may need to gather a supply of resources for the students or talk to the students ahead of the lesson and giving them a list of items such as want ads, information about local companies, financial aid information, information about education/training available in the area. There may be agencies in the area that would send representatives to talk to the class about these various topics and leave information. There are ways to do the research if Internet access is not available and students should experience various ways of doing the research.

#### **Activity:**

Tell the students to search for an employer that employs people in the career field they have chosen. They should try to find more than one employer so they can compare the employers. Many companies have their own web sites that can be located by typing in

the name of the company in the URL. The students may also go to one of the web sites in the handout and search for employers.

Have the class gather the information about the various employers and look for ways to apply for the jobs. Do they need to go in person or can they apply over the Internet. Try to find the employer's annual report. The annual report of a company will give information that can be of benefit during the interview process.

Most careers involve some training or continued education. Have the students look for institutions, agencies, apprenticeships, etc.. The students need to gather the information and estimate a cost for the education/training.

Once the students have estimated the cost of education/training, they need to research ways of getting the money they will need. This would be a good time to have someone from an agency that offers free counseling on financial aid to come and address the classroom. Financial aid forms will be available at most schools or online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>, and could be distributed to the students that intend to further their education. Make the students aware that there are thousands of scholarships and it is very likely that they may qualify for scholarships also.

Have the students put the information they have gathered in their portfolio. Check the portfolios to see that they are staying organized. Use the teacher's portfolio as an example of how it should look.

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*Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice: it is not to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.*

- William Jennings Bryan

## Unit 4: Goal Setting

**Objectives:** In this lesson, the participant will:

1. Identify the need for setting goals.
2. Recognize the elements of SMART goals.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of long-term and short-term SMART goals.

**Session Time:** 50 – 60 minutes

**Equipment:** Marker board/chalkboard

**Materials:** Student handouts from Goals chapter

**Methods:** Guided discussion, worksheets, demonstration

**Instruction:** This lesson is on goal setting and includes information on SMART goals, long-term goals, and short-term goals. Also included are worksheets to allow the students to demonstrate an understanding of setting long-term and short-term SMART goals. You can lead guided discussion at several points in the lesson such as:

- What is a long term goal? Can you give me an example?
- What is a short term goal? Can you give me an example?
- Can you give me an example of what a specific goal might be?
- What would be a measurement that you could use for a goal?
- Can you give me an example of a goal that may not be achievable for you at this time?
- What do you think we mean by *relevant* goals?
- How is timely different from measurable?
- Will someone please share their long-term and short-term goals?

### Goal Setting

A **goal** is what you achieve when you work towards something you want. Goals can be **long-term**—for example, getting a good job, having a great family or living in a nice house. Or, they can be **short-term**—like what you want to do this weekend.

**Goal setting** involves knowing what you want and designing a plan to get it. Goal achievement, as you can imagine, can be challenging. For example, it may be easy to set a goal like, “I’d like a family with two kids and a great job that I’ll enjoy.” To accomplish this goal involves hard work, good planning, and careful decision making.

**Goal achievement** is also challenging. You may be able to put your goal in writing, list the tasks, and put a plan in place. The challenge is to stay focused and be persistent.

## Introduction to SMART goals

To optimize the chance of achieving a goal it needs to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely. This acronym of SMART goals will help you remember these 5 components when setting goals.

### **Specific**

**Goals should be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen.**

Specifics help us to **focus our efforts** and **clearly define what we are going to do**. Specific is the What, Why, and How of the SMART model.

**WHAT** are you going to do? Use action words such as direct, organize, coordinate, lead, develop, plan, build etc.

**WHY** is this important to do at this time? What do you want to ultimately accomplish?

**HOW** are you going to do it? (By...)

Ensure the goals you set are very **specific and clear**. Instead of setting a goal to lose weight or be healthier, set a specific goal to run three times a week, eat three healthy meals a day, and lift weights twice a week. A **specific goal** is both **effective and efficient**.

### **Measurable**

**If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.**

Choose a goal with measurable progress, **so you can see the change occur**. How will you know when you reach your goal? Be specific! *"I want to read three Harry Potter books before my birthday"* shows the specific target to be measured. *"I want to read more"* is not as measurable.

**Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress** toward the attainment of each goal you set. Also, when a goal is measurable, you can break it down into smaller sub goals. In this way you can transform a seemingly large goal into smaller, easily attainable ones.

### **Achievable**

**This is not a synonym for "easy."**

Achievable, in this case, means **"do-able."** Although you may start with the best of intentions, the knowledge that it's too much for you means your subconscious will keep reminding you of this fact and will stop you from even giving it your best.

**A goal needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it and it will need a real commitment from you.** For instance, if you aim to lose 20 lbs in one week, we all

know that isn't achievable. But setting a goal to lose 1lb and when you've achieved that, aiming to lose another 1 lb, will keep it achievable for you.

**Set the bar high enough for a satisfying achievement!**

## **Relevant**

**Your goal should be set by you rather than by someone else.**

You know your strengths and weaknesses the best. When you set your goal, be sure that the desired outcome is something that you can affect and control. That way, the responsibility lies within you, and not with outside forces. Too often people hope for outcomes that they themselves cannot effect. This leaves them frustrated and disappointed.

**If you can see how a goal can impact your life, you'll be motivated to achieve it.**

When you set goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the **attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity** to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked **opportunities** to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

## **Timely**

**Set a timeframe for the goal.**

Will you reach your goal next week, in three months, by the next year? Putting an end point on your goal gives you a **clear target date** to work towards.

If you don't set a time, the commitment is too vague. It tends not to happen because you feel you can start at any time. Without a **time limit**, there's no urgency to start **taking action** now.

**Here are some examples of goals that follow the SMART formula:**

**Goal:** Reduce my use of over-the-counter pain medications

**When I want to achieve it:** 2 weeks

**How I'm going to do it:**

- Plan my day to include exercise
- Pace myself at work and take frequent breaks
- Use relaxation techniques

**How I'm going to measure it:** Each day, record in my journal the medication I took and how much

**Goal:** Exercise 40 minutes each day

**When I want to achieve it:** 4 weeks

**How I'm going to do it:**

- Stretch and do strengthening exercises 15 minutes in the morning
- Walk 10 minutes during my lunch hour
- Bicycle 15 minutes in the evening

**How I'm going to measure it:** Record in my journal when I exercised and for how long

## **Failure and Success in Meeting a Goal**

- If you fail to meet a goal, analyze what went wrong.
- Did you not follow the plan or was the goal unrealistic?
- Take action to improve performance or analyze the goal and set a realistic goal.
- Reward yourself when you achieve a goal. Take pleasure in the progress you are making toward your lifetime goals.
- Set new goals to keep you moving forward.
- Analyze your success. If the goal was easily achieved, make your next goal harder. If the goal took a long time to achieve, make your next goal easier.

Remember, goals tend to change as you mature. Review and revise future goals to reflect growth in your personality.

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*"Great minds must be ready not only to take opportunities, but to make them." --Colton*

This worksheet is designed to help you set **long-term** goals. To be effective, the goal you choose needs to include the following steps:

Identify your long-term goal. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Set a deadline to achieve your goal. DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

What obstacles may block your progress?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What information, skills, or knowledge do you need? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Identify the resources and assistance you need to reach your goal (people, groups, financial aid, technology, etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the benefits of achieving your goal? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Write down one of your **long-term goals**.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List the **short-term goals** you need in order to achieve your long-term goal.

### Short-Term Goal Number 1

Date Started \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps**  
*(What will I do to achieve my goal?)*

**Obstacles**  
*(Things that might keep me from achieving my goal.)*

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

How I am going to measure it \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Short-Term Goal Number 2

Date Started \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps**  
*(What will I do to achieve my goal?)*

**Obstacles**  
*(Things that might keep me from achieving my goal.)*

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

How I am going to measure it \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Use the following strategy for developing a goal-setting project.**

**Start with a piece of paper and a pencil.** Goals in writing have a stronger chance of achievement. A personal goal statement might look like this: "I will get an interesting part-time job this summer that pays at least \$8 per hour." The more specific you make the goal, the easier it is to stay focused on the outcome.

**Make a list of all the tasks you need to do in order to accomplish this goal.**

In this example, you might write the following:

- Check with the school's work-study department.
- List 10 places I would like to work and find out the manager's name.
- Design a short resume and get all the information that I need to fill out the application.
- Talk to friends and their parents for advice and recommendations.
- Once you have the list, put the tasks in priority—in what order should you do the tasks?

**Put your action plan in place.**

That means move from the planning phase to the doing phase. For example, write your resume and have someone check it. Finalize your design and print 20 copies. Now you're ready to talk with people about a job.

**After you have accomplished several action steps, determine whether the plan is working.**

You may have found new information that changes your plan. For example, you discover that a company doing work related to your career objective is looking for an unpaid intern. The experience would be extraordinary. You redirect your goal and try to get the internship. Goals can change or be modified when you gain better information.

**Realize that some goals may not be achievable.**

Goal setting means you give it your best effort. Everybody has goals that they may not achieve. Don't be disappointed. In fact, if you always achieve your goals, you may not be setting them high enough. Learn from your experience and move on. Life has many opportunities as well as disappointments. The important part is that you tried.

## **Unit 5: Career Essay**

**Objectives:** In this lesson, the participant will:

1. Construct a five-paragraph essay called “The Career I Want”.
2. Analyze research information.
3. Synthesize relevant information for the essay.

**Session time:** 50 – 60 minutes

**Equipment:** Flip chart and easel or marker board/chalk board

**Materials:** Handouts

**Methods:** Demonstration, discussion, independent study

### **Instruction:**

The previous lessons have been devoted to gathering information and focusing on a career. In this lesson the students will create a five-paragraph essay from their research material.

### **Activity:**

Distribute the “Five Paragraph Essay” handout. Use the handout to help explain the organization of the essay. The topic for the essay will be “The Career I Want”. Instruct the students to use their focus career in their topic. The three subtopics will be place of employment, education, and financial aid. Instruct them to take information from the research they have in their career portfolios and construct a five-paragraph essay. It is a good idea to let the students see an example of an excellent essay. This will reinforce the organization of the essay.

Many students want to start out by trying to write without planning or brainstorming. Demonstrate on the board how to plug in information in the above diagram. Use the teacher’s career portfolio for an example and insert the corresponding information into the boxes that represent the paragraphs. Then the essay can be written from the information in the boxes. This is a quick and visual way to outline the essay.

Collect the essays when the students are finished. Allow the students to do as many drafts as it takes to get a final draft that is acceptable for their portfolio.

*Opportunity is missed by most because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.*

Thomas Edison

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### **Five Paragraph Essay**

The five-paragraph essay follows a defined format. The first paragraph introduces us to the thesis of the essay and directs us to the three main supporting subtopics. The second through fourth paragraphs are all similar in format. They individually restate the subtopics, and are developed by giving supporting information. The fifth and last paragraph restates the main thesis idea and reminds the reader of the three main supporting ideas that were developed. All of these paragraphs are important.

The introductory paragraph is the place in which the writer introduces the reader to the topic. It is important to make this a clear and limited statement. This is where the writer grabs the reader's attention. Because of its purpose, it is often the first sentence of the paragraph. It is followed by three subtopics that develop the thesis. Between this paragraph and all paragraphs of the essay, there needs to be some kind of a transition word, phrase, or sentence.

Next, the body of the essay contains paragraphs two through four. They are all similarly constructed. Their topic sentences are restatements, often in original form, of the three supporting ideas presented in the first paragraph. Three or more supporting sentences again support the subtopic of each of the body paragraphs. These cement, in the reader's mind, the relevancy and relationship of each of the subtopics to the thesis statement.

Finally, the fifth paragraph is the summary paragraph. It is important to restate the thesis and three supporting ideas in an original and powerful manner. This is the last chance the writer has to convince the reader of the validity of the information. Because the purposes of the first and fifth paragraph are so similar that some writers construct them at the same time. They will edit them, as necessary, as they do with each and every part of the essay.

It is important to reiterate that each of the paragraphs is joined together by a transition word, phrase or sentence. Transitions help the reader to follow the flow of the logic and sequencing. All of the essay types follow this basic transition format. However, there is more latitude with the narrative essay because of its nature.

### **Introductory Paragraph**

**General Topic Sentence**  
Subtopic One  
Subtopic Two  
Subtopic Three

Transition

### **First Supporting Paragraph**

**Restate Subtopic One**  
First Supporting Detail or Example  
Second Supporting Detail or Example  
Third Supporting Detail or Example

Transition

### **Second Supporting Paragraph**

**Restate Subtopic Two**  
First Supporting Detail or Example  
Second Supporting Detail or Example  
Third Supporting Detail or Example

Transition

### **Third Supporting Paragraph**

**Restate Subtopic Three**  
First Supporting Detail or Example  
Second Supporting Detail or Example  
Third Supporting Detail or Example

Transition

### **Closing or Summary Paragraph**

**Synthesis of main topic**

## **Unit 6:** Resume and Cover Letter

**Objectives:** In this lesson, the participant will:

1. Identify the elements of a resume.
2. Compile personal information.
3. Create a personal resume.
4. Create a cover letter.

**Equipment:** Overhead projector and screen, flip chart and easel or marker board/chalk board

**Materials:** Overhead transparencies, handouts

**Methods:** Guided discussion and independent work

### **Instruction:**

The resume is a selling tool that outlines a person's skills and experiences so an employer can see, at a glance, how a person can contribute to the employer's workplace.

#### Activity #1.

The resume: Explain to the students, "Your resume has to sell you in short order. While you may have all the requirements for a particular position, your resume is a failure if the employer does not instantly come to the conclusion that you "have what it takes." The first hurdle your resume has to pass--whether it ends up in the "consider file" or the "reject file"--may take less than thirty seconds."

Many times students have limited work experience and need help recognizing work experiences that may make up a resume. Ask the class to give examples of work they have done in the past and start a list on the board. Make sure to include jobs like mowing lawns, babysitting, washing cars, or any other kind of experience that may show a willingness to work and can be reinforced by a reference.

Next have the class give examples of activities, awards, and volunteer work they have done or received and make a list. Be sure to include things like youth organizations, church, sports, etc.

Have the students spend some time and write a personal history of their work experiences, activities, awards, volunteer work and education. This will be the pool of experiences from which they will draft their resume.

Explain to the class, "The most effective resumes are clearly focused on a specific job title and address the employer's stated requirements for the position. In the previous lesson you picked a career that interested you, found information about the job, and investigated an employer that would hire you for that job. The more you know about the duties and skills required for the job, and organize your resume around these points, the more effective the resume."

Hand out sample resumes and read over them with the class. Have each student pick a resume format that will best fit the student's experiences. Instruct the students to use the information from their personal history to create the resume. You may decide to let the students embellish some of the points of their resume, such as education, to fit the career that they picked in the earlier lessons. They should be aware that this is practice and they would never put any information that was not true on a resume to use for a real job hunt.

### **Also Leave Out...**

- Reasons for having left a job -- they won't enhance your image, and you may create a negative impression.
- Former (or desired) salary -- you need to know as much as possible about the job in order to avoid asking for too little or too much.
- Don't risk putting yourself out of the running before you've even begun.
- Hobbies and memberships in social, fraternal, or religious organizations -- potential employers don't need this information, and you never know what may turn them off.
- Reasons for not having served in the military.
- Any potentially negative information about you (unless unavoidable), such as prison terms, lost lawsuits, and disabilities that may affect your job performance.
- The label "Resume" or "Vitae" -- if the briefest glance does not clearly identify your resume as such, the label will not help.
- The banal "References available on request"; this is taken for granted.

### **Activity #2.**

**The Cover Letter:** Everyone who sends out a resume needs a cover letter. Even if the cover letter never "came up" in conversation or wasn't mentioned in an advertisement, it's expected. The cover letter gives a person another chance to emphasize what he or

she has to contribute to the company or organization and should be tailored to the specific company.

A cover letter will help answer any questions about what you have to offer the company in your own words. Your resume will also answer the questions but in a somewhat more rigid format.

*Distribute the “What makes a good cover letter?” handout and discuss with the students.*

Hand out the sample cover letter and have the students create a cover letter to go along with their resume.

**Conclusion:** Gaining skills in writing effective resumes and cover letters is essential for today’s workforce. A professional looking resume and cover letter can definitely give a person the edge needed in today’s job market.

---

*Creativity comes from trust. Trust your instincts. And never hope more than you work.*

Rita Mae Brown

## What Makes a *Good* Cover Letter?

1. **No spelling or typing errors.** Not even one.
2. **Address it to the person who can hire you.** Resumes sent to the personnel department have a tougher time of it. If you can find out (through networking and researching) exactly who is making the hiring decision, address the letter to that person. Be sure the name is spelled correctly and the title is correct. A touch of formality is good too: address the person as "Mr.," "Ms.," "Mrs.," "Miss," "Dr.," or "Professor."
3. **Write it in your own words** so that it sounds like you--not like something out of a book. Employers are looking for knowledge, enthusiasm, and focus.
4. **Show that you know something about the company and the industry.** This is where your research comes in. Don't go overboard--just make it clear that you didn't pick this company out of the phone book. You know who they are, what they do and *you* have chosen them!
5. **Use terms and phrases that are meaningful to the employer.** (This is where your industry research and networking come in.) Answer the specific needs that the job calls for and use language that you find in the ad for the job.

Your mailing address  
Your phone number, including area code

Date letter is mailed

Name and title of a specific person  
Company name  
Mailing address

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. Last Name, (If the person has a unisex first name, use his or her full name. For women, use Ms. unless you know they use the prefix Mrs.)

*First Paragraph:* In your initial paragraph, state the reason for the letter, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying, and indicate from which resource (placement center, news media, friend, employment service) you learned of the opening. Your first sentence should catch the reader's attention and reflect your interest in the company.

*Second Paragraph:* Indicate why you are interested in the position, the company, its products or services - above all, clearly state what you can do for the employer. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for the position. If you had some practical work experience, point out your specific achievements or unique qualifications. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in your résumé.

*Final Paragraph:* In the closing paragraph, refer the reader to the enclosed résumé or application which summarizes your qualifications, training, and experiences. Indicate your desire for a personal interview and your flexibility as to the time and place. If the job announcement requests no phone calls, repeat your phone number in the letter. If no such request is made, state that you will call on a certain date to set up an interview.

**Salary information should only be provided upon request.**

Sincerely yours,

(Your Signature)

Your typed name

(enclosure)

42 Blossom Drive  
Wethersfield, CT 06109  
(860) 555-5555

August 8, 2000

Chris Thompson  
Editor  
American Literature Monthly  
55 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chris Thompson,

I understand that American Literature Monthly has nearly doubled its circulation in the past ten months. It is wonderful to know more people are exploring American Literature and broadening their horizons. I hope that I can be part of this phenomenal growth by filling the Assistant Writer position advertised in the Hartford Gazette.

I have recently graduated from Southern Connecticut State University, where I focused on American Literature. While attending, I had the good fortune to work as an intern for Name First, an advertising firm servicing local businesses. Utilizing my writing and computer skills, I created a variety of promotional materials and press releases to suit individual company's needs.

My knowledge of American Literature, along with my writing and marketing skills, would be an asset to American Literature Monthly. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss some of my ideas on the subject. At your request, I am providing my salary history. While working part-time at Quiet Corner Book Store, my annual salary is \$11,400. Prior to that, I earned \$54,300 while working full-time at Freeman & Reed Accounting Services. I have enclosed my résumé for your review and will telephone you on August 17th to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Andrew Dragon

42 Blossom Drive  
Wethersfield, CT 06109  
(860) 555-5555

August 23, 2000

Chris Thompson  
Editor  
American Literature Monthly  
55 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Thompson,

I enjoyed our discussion on Tuesday regarding the American Literature Monthly's history and future along with the role of the Writing Assistant position. Your plans to expand coverage on modern literature and poetry will certainly add a new dynamic to the magazine, and thereby increase its audience. Such growth can be accelerated with innovative marketing research and materials.

As we discussed during the interview, I have exceptional skills and experience in creating marketing materials that would be valuable in this new venture. For example, my marketing decisions increased sales at Quiet Corner Book Store by 30% in two months. Combined with my knowledge of American Literature, I feel confident in fulfilling the requirements of the Writing Assistant position.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. I am very interested in working for American Literature Monthly, and look forward to future discussions.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Andrew Dragon

**CHRIS SMITH**  
178 Green Street  
Huntington, WV 25701  
(304) 555-5555

**OBJECTIVE**

To contribute relevant experience and education background to the position of **Computer Programmer/Software Engineer**.

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Proficient in the design and implementation of program enhancements, including an on-line message system, database repair/trouble-shooting utilities and a release system to update clients on the current version of software.
- Demonstrated ability in the provision of client support services.

**EXPERIENCE**

**6/1989 to Present    Senior Programmer - Patient Scheduling System**

TESSERACT CORPORATION    Huntington, WV

A privately owned software company specializing in the needs of the health care industry.

- Design and implementation of new system enhancements.
- Sole development of new generator product. Designed file structure and conducted actual coding based on functional specification requirements.

**3/1988 to 6/1989        Programmer/Analyst**

- Installed software for new clients and provided on-site support.
- Developed on-line message system for members of the programming group.
- Instituted utilities that aided in the detection and evaluation of client bugs and made repairs to the client database.
- Supported existing clients and resolved critical issues/problems in a timely fashion.

## **EDUCATION**

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY, 1993-Present Huntington, WV  
Enrolled in Graduate Mathematics program (Part-time)

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY, 1985-1989 Morgantown, WV  
Bachelor of Science Degree: Computer Science Engineering

## **COMPUTERS**

Programming Languages: C++, C, Jam, Pascal, LISP, IBM, PL/1,  
Prolog, AION

Databases: SQL/DS, Oracle

Hardware: HP 9000, IBM 3090

**EVELYN PLUMMER**  
**259 Highway Lane**

**Danbury, Ct 06810**

**(203) 555-1234**

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide top-quality, conscientious service as a typist and office clerk in an industrial firm.

**SKILLS SUMMARY:** Typing – 75 WPM; shorthand – 100 WPM; copy machine; fax machine; IBM PC; Apple

**EDUCATION:**

**1994-PRESENT** Danbury Community College, Danbury CT  
Certificate – Office Technology

**1993-1994** Danbury Community College, Danbury, CT  
G.E.D. Certificate

**EXPERIENCE:**

**1979-1985** Typist - File Clerk  
Feinberg Associates, Danbury, CT  
Assembled data from legal reports, typed revisions and legal contracts, served as relief receptionist, maintained office files and provided general office assistance.

**1985-1990** Manzo Realtors, Forest Hills, NY  
Served as receptionist to large real estate company; typed documents related to sale and purchase of property; filed records of clients and construction companies; maintained appointment schedules

## **CHRISTOPHER B. JOBLESS**

**One Opportunity Highway  
Any town, IL 00000  
(000) 000-0000**

**OBJECTIVE:** Seeking entry-level position in retail sales.

**EDUCATION:** G.E.D. Diploma, My Community College, Any town, IL

**SKILLS AND ABILITIES:**

**Communication:**

Delivered 45-minute speeches to 160 people in speech class. Taught instructor to jump-start her 1978 VW Microbus. Taught woodworking class to 38 kids as camp counselor.

**Selling:**

Sold my car, negotiated with customers, got my asking price. Convinced 14 businesses to sponsor ads in high school yearbook. Generated \$476.35 for SADD fundraiser.

**Computers:**

Proficient in IBM and Apple computers (G.E.D. computer class). Assisted uncle in understanding how to operate his new IBM PC. Enjoy the challenge of learning new programs.

**ANNE M. PLOYEE**

**47 Oak Tree Lane  
Deerfield, MO 60110  
(816) 555-1212**

OBJECTIVE

Seeking part-time hostess position

EDUCATION

1995: G.E.D. Diploma, Deerfield Community College, Deerfield, IL

WORK EXPERIENCE

1988-1995: Hostess/Server, Holiday Inn, Deerfield, IL

1980-1988: Waitress, Baxter's Restaurant, Copper, IL

ACTIVITIES

Arts and Crafts Council (Treasurer)

Red Cross Life Savers

## **Unit 7: Interviewing and Applications**

**Objectives:** In this lesson, the participants will:

1. Recognize the elements of a successful interview.
2. Demonstrate the interviewing skills.
3. Identify how to correctly fill out an employment application.
4. Demonstrate how to correctly fill out an employment application.
5. Complete and review the ICDP.

**Session Time:** 90-120 minutes (the total process will take several class periods)

**Equipment:** Overhead projector and screen, flip chart and easel or marker board/chalk board

**Materials:** Overhead transparencies, handouts

**Methods:** Guided discussion, demonstration, group work, independent work, role play

### **Instruction:**

The resume and cover letter are designed to open the door for an interview. Once a student has his or her foot in the door it is important for that student to know how to prepare for the interview and what to do during the interview process.

It is especially important that the student practice being interviewed beforehand. This will help frame answers and rehearse responses to difficult questions as well as ensuring that a person incorporates all the significant points that need to be made. An exercise is included in this lesson to give students the opportunity to do a mock interview while fellow students judge their performance.

### **Activity #1**

**The Interview:** Distribute the handout titled "*The Interview*" and discuss it with the students. Ask the students to give examples of the types of careers they found in their career exploration exercise earlier in this unit. List their responses on the board and have the students complete the "Interview Quiz".

### **Activity #2. Applications**

Tell the students that you are going to do mock interviews with them and they will have an opportunity to practice their interview skills. Instruct them to look over the information

they have about the companies that would hire them for the careers that they have picked (they should have this information from previous lessons in this unit).

Let the students know that they will each have a chance to interview while the rest of the class scores their interviewing skills on the Mock Interview Checklist. This process will take longer than a single class period so be prepared to carry the lesson over to other class times.

You may want to let them actually dress for the interview and postpone starting the mock interview process. This would give them time to study the information on interviewing techniques and the information on the company that they have picked.

### **Activity #3**

Knowing the proper techniques for filling out an employment application is critical to success in the workforce. Employers look for applications that are neat and properly filled out.

Distribute the handout titled *Sample Application*. Go over the handout with the students and give them an opportunity to fill out the sample application and enter it into their portfolio.

### **Conclusion:**

Success in the workforce starts with the foundation of a solid Individual Career Development Plan. After the students have completed this unit they will have created their own ICDP. Review the components of the portfolio with the students. It will be a realistic tool for the students to use in their attempt to enter the workforce.

### **ICDP Components:**

Self-Assessment  
Occupational Outlook Handbook search  
Employer search  
Training search  
Funding search  
Career essay  
Resume/cover letter  
Interview  
Application

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*The dictionary is the only place that success comes before work. Hard work is the price we must pay for success. I think you can accomplish anything if you're willing to pay the price.*      **Vince Lombardi**

Sample Employment Application Form

PLEASE PRINT ALL  
INFORMATION REQUESTED  
EXCEPT SIGNATURE

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

APPLICANTS MAY BE TESTED FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS

|   |        |        |  |            |     |
|---|--------|--------|--|------------|-----|
| PLEASE COMPLETE PAGES 1-5.  |        |        |  | DATE _____ |     |
| <b>Name</b> _____   |        |        |  |            |     |
| Last  | First  | Middle | Maiden   |            |     |
| <b>Present address</b> _____  |        |        |  |            |     |
|   | Number | Street | City   | State      | Zip |
| <b>How long</b> _____   |        |        | <b>Social Security No.</b> _____ - _____ - _____ |            |     |
| <b>Telephone ( )</b> _____  |        |        |  |            |     |
| <b>If under 18, please list age</b> _____   |        |        |  |            |     |
| <b>Position applied for (1)</b> _____   |        |        | <b>Days/hours available to work</b>              |            |     |
| <b>and salary desired (2)</b> _____   |        |        | <b>No Pref</b> _____ <b>Thur</b> _____           |            |     |
| <b>(Be specific)</b>  |        |        | <b>Mon</b> _____ <b>Fri</b> _____                |            |     |
|   |        |        | <b>Tue</b> _____ <b>Sat</b> _____                |            |     |
|   |        |        | <b>Wed</b> _____ <b>Sun</b> _____                |            |     |
| <b>How many hours can you work weekly?</b> _____  |        |        | <b>Can you work nights?</b> _____                |            |     |
| <b>Employment desired</b> <input type="checkbox"/> FULL-TIME ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> PART-TIME ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> FULL- OR PART-TIME |        |        |  |            |     |
| <b>When available for work?</b> _____   |        |        |  |            |     |

| TYPE OF SCHOOL       | NAME OF SCHOOL | LOCATION<br>(Complete mailing address) | NUMBER OF YEARS COMPLETED | MAJOR & DEGREE |
|----------------------|----------------|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| High School          |                |  |                           |                |
| College              |                |  |                           |                |
| Bus. or Trade School |                |  |                           |                |
| Professional School  |                |  |                           |                |

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME?     No     Yes

If yes, explain number of conviction(s), nature of offense(s) leading to conviction(s), how recently such offense(s) was/were committed, sentence(s) imposed, and type(s) of rehabilitation. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



PLEASE PRINT ALL  
INFORMATION REQUESTED  
EXCEPT SIGNATURE

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

**MILITARY**

**HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN THE ARMED FORCES?**       Yes    No

**ARE YOU NOW A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD?**       Yes    No

**Specialty** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Entered** \_\_\_\_\_ **Discharge Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Work Experience      **Please list your work experience for the past five years beginning with your most recent job held. If you were self-employed, give firm name.** Attach additional sheets if necessary.

|   |                                |                          |                              |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Name of employer</b><br><b>Address</b><br><b>City, State, Zip Code</b><br><b>Phone number</b>                                      | <b>Name of last supervisor</b> | <b>Employment dates</b>  | <b>Pay or salary</b>         |
|   |                                | <b>From</b><br><b>To</b> | <b>Start</b><br><b>Final</b> |
|   | <b>Your last job title</b>     |                          |                              |
| <b>Reason for leaving (be specific)</b>   |                                |                          |                              |
| <b>List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.</b> |                                |                          |                              |

|   |                                |                          |                              |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Name of employer</b><br><b>Address</b><br><b>City, State, Zip Code</b><br><b>Phone number</b>                                      | <b>Name of last supervisor</b> | <b>Employment dates</b>  | <b>Pay or salary</b>         |
|   |                                | <b>From</b><br><b>To</b> | <b>Start</b><br><b>Final</b> |
|   | <b>Your Last Job Title</b>     |                          |                              |
| <b>Reason for leaving (be specific)</b>   |                                |                          |                              |
| <b>List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.</b> |                                |                          |                              |

PLEASE PRINT ALL  
INFORMATION REQUESTED  
EXCEPT SIGNATURE

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Work **Please list your work experience for the past five years beginning with your most recent job held.**  
experience **If you were self-employed, give firm name.** Attach additional sheets if necessary.

|   |                                |                          |                              |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Name of employer</b><br><b>Address</b><br><b>City, State, Zip Code</b><br><b>Phone number</b>                                      | <b>Name of last supervisor</b> | <b>Employment dates</b>  | <b>Pay or salary</b>         |
|   |                                | <b>From</b><br><b>To</b> | <b>Start</b><br><b>Final</b> |
|   | <b>Your last job title</b>     |                          |                              |
| <b>Reason for leaving (be specific)</b>   |                                |                          |                              |
| <b>List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.</b> |                                |                          |                              |

|   |                                |                          |                              |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Name of employer</b><br><b>Address</b><br><b>City, State, Zip Code</b><br><b>Phone number</b>                                      | <b>Name of last supervisor</b> | <b>Employment dates</b>  | <b>Pay or salary</b>         |
|   |                                | <b>From</b><br><b>To</b> | <b>Start</b><br><b>Final</b> |
|   | <b>Your last job title</b>     |                          |                              |
| <b>Reason for leaving (be specific)</b>   |                                |                          |                              |
| <b>List the jobs you held, duties performed, skills used or learned, advancements or promotions while you worked at this company.</b> |                                |                          |                              |

May we contact your present employer?  Yes  No

Did you complete this application yourself  Yes  No

If not, who did? \_\_\_\_\_

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**PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

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**APPLICATION FORM WAIVER**

In exchange for the consideration of my job application by \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter called “the Company”), I agree that:

Neither the acceptance of this application nor the subsequent entry into any type of employment relationship, either in the position applied for or any other position, and regardless of the contents of employee handbooks, personnel manuals, benefit plans, policy statements, and the like as they may exist from time to time, or other Company practices, shall serve to create an actual or implied contract of employment, or to confer any right to remain an employee of \_\_\_\_\_, or otherwise to change in any respect the employment-at-will relationship between it and the undersigned, and that relationship cannot be altered except by a written instrument signed by the President /General Manager of the Company. Both the undersigned and \_\_\_\_\_ may end the employment relationship at any time, without specified notice or reason. If employed, I understand that the Company may unilaterally change or revise their benefits, policies and procedures and such changes may include reduction in benefits.

I authorize investigation of all statements contained in this application. I understand that the misrepresentation or omission of facts called for is cause for dismissal at any time without any previous notice. I hereby give the Company permission to contact schools, previous employers (unless otherwise indicated), references, and others, and hereby release the Company from any liability as a result of such contract.

I also understand that (1) the Company has a drug and alcohol policy that provides for preemployment testing as well as testing after employment; (2) consent to and compliance with such policy is a condition of my employment; and (3) continued employment is based on the successful passing of testing under such policy. I further understand that continued employment may be based on the successful passing of job-related physical examinations.

I understand that, in connection with the routine processing of your employment application, the Company may request from a consumer reporting agency an investigative consumer report including information as to my credit records, character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and mode of living. Upon written request from me, the Company, will provide me with additional information concerning the nature and scope of any such report requested by it, as required by the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

I further understand that my employment with the Company shall be probationary for a period of sixty (60) days, and further that at any time during the probationary period or thereafter, my employment relation with the Company is terminable at will for any reason by either party.

**Signature of applicant** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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This Company is an equal employment opportunity employer. We adhere to a policy of making employment decisions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, age or disability. We assure you that your opportunity for employment with this Company depends solely on your qualifications.

Thank you for completing this application form and for your interest in our business.

**These are the most commonly asked questions.**

**Think about your answers and practice them prior to your interview!**

What are the responsibilities of your current or previous position?

What do you know about this industry?

What do you know about our company?

How long will it take for you to make a significant contribution?

What is your most significant accomplishment?

Why did you leave your last job?

Why do you think you would like to work for our company?

If it were your first day, what would you say to the associates you will be working with?

What have you done to overcome major obstacles in your life?

Are you willing to relocate?

How would you describe your work style?

Tell me about yourself?

Why do you think we should hire you for this job?

How do you define success?

What was the last book you read?

What area of this job would you find most difficult?

What leadership/supervisory roles have you held?

What is your weakness?

What is your strength?

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

What has been your greatest crisis, how did you solve it?

What person has had the greatest influence on you, why?

What do you like best about your job/school. What do you like least?

How has college prepared you for this career?

Describe your ideal job.

Why did you choose this particular field of work?

What have you done that shows initiative?

In what areas of the job would you expect to be most successful....least?

What do you see yourself doing in 5 or 10 years?

What are your salary requirements?

What frustrates you?

Describe a situation with an irate customer and how you handled it?

What aspect of this job do you consider most crucial?

What are your long range career objectives and how do you plan to achieve them?

How do think a friend would describe you?

What motivates you?

How many hours a week do you need to work to get the job done?

How do you work under pressure?

What two or three things are most important to you in your job?

Tell me about other jobs you've had. In hindsight, how could you have improved your performance?

What makes a good supervisor?

What skills do you want to improve?

## Interview Quiz

**Directions:** Circle the letter for the best answer of each of the following questions.

### 1) What do you know about our organization?

a) "I've done a little homework and here is what I know about your organization...(cite examples)"

b) "Everything I've seen and heard makes me want to be a part of this organization. I understand your industry is \_\_\_\_\_ and your primary customer is \_\_\_\_\_. A particularly exciting part of your business appears to be \_\_\_\_\_."

c) "I know enough to know this is an exciting place to work. It appears to be fit for my career goals."

**b) This is the best answer. Although this takes a little preparation, this level of knowledge and precise presentation will do wonders for starting an interview on the right foot**

### 2) Why are you the best person for the job?

a) "I've held a lot of positions like this one, and that experience will help me here."

b) "Because I am good at what I do."

c) "Our discussion here leads me to believe this is a good place to work."

d) "You need someone who can produce results, and my background and experience are proof of my ability. For example..."

**d) This is the best answer. Acknowledging the need and giving a supported answer is the best tactic here.**

### 3) Tell me about yourself.

a) Outline personal data, hobbies, and interests.

b) Give an overview of your personality and work habits.

c) Give three specific examples of your personality traits and accomplishments.

**c) This is the best answer. Examples are proof of your ability and a sign of confidence. Giving a clear concise example will be more memorable and set you**

**apart from the group. Before the interview, think the needs of the job and how your personality could be a fit.**

**4) What are your strengths?**

a) "I am good at giving constructive criticism to my coworkers. This honesty is something I'm very proud of and have found essential to having open working relationships."

b) "I consider myself to be very consistent. I have proven myself to be someone who can be counted upon to do what is expected."

c) "I would have to chose between two skills. I am very proud of my determination and ability to get things done. At the same time, I am very proud of my analytical abilities and problem solving skills. These skills combine to give me a unique ability to solve problems and then implement the solutions."

**c) This is the best answer. This shows you have given some real thought to your strengths and highlights not only the skills you have, but also of what use they are to the employer.**

**5) If asked a point blank question, such as are you creative, or can you work under pressure?**

**What is the best way to answer?**

a) Answer yes or no.

b) Answer yes and give a specific example.

c) Answer yes and give an explanation.

**b) This is the best answer. A brief, specific example supports your answer well and says you are confident, well prepared, and genuine.**

**6) How would you characterize your work style?**

a) "I am a very driven person. I make a list of what needs to be done and then tackle the items until I've completed the job."

b) "I show up whenever I'm scheduled to work."

c) "I haven't held a job yet so I don't know what my work style will be."

**a) This is the best answer. It shows you are organized, willing to pay attention to detail, and stick with a job until it is complete.**

**7) What are your short term goals?**

- a) "Short term, I just want a job."
- b) "Bills are beginning to pile up. In the short run I need to find work so I can keep up with my obligations."
- c) "Short-term, I'd like to find a position that is a good fit and where I can contribute to a company's bottom line. The position we are here to discuss today would appear to be such an opportunity. Could you tell me more about it?"

**c) This is the best answer. This answer alludes to "giving" as well as "getting" AND it refocuses the discussion on the job opening.**

**8) Where do you want to be in 5 years?**

- a) "I haven't really thought that far ahead but I think I'd want your job."
- b) "If selected I would hope to meet my goals and take advantage of opportunities to learn so I will be considered for other positions within the company. I hope to build my career with a company such as this one."
- c) "Long term, I hope to start my own business."

**b) This is the best answer: This answer suggests both a desire to move up and an understanding that the exact pace of movement is subject to many factors. Reassuring the interviewer of a desire to stay with a company is always a good idea.**

**9) Before we go any further, what kind of money do you need to make?**

- a) "I feel I am worth at least \$30,000."
- b) "My salary requirements are negotiable. Your firm has a reputation of compensating employees fairly and I trust you would do the same in my case. I am very interested in finding the right opportunity and will be open to any fair offer when I do so."
- c) "Money is not very important to me. I need to be able to pay the bills but the work environment is far more important to me."

**b) This is the best answer. It shows a willingness to work with the organization to determine a fair salary. If you have done your homework you know about how much that would be annually.**

**10) Describe a situation you've encountered with a difficult customer.**

a) "In my last job I dealt with customers at a retail store. One customer wanted to return an item she had obviously bought several years ago, which was against store policy. I talked to her calmly and explained our policies and encouraged her to shop and I would exchange the item however I could not give a refund."

b) "I rarely encounter a difficult customer because of my excellent customer service."

c) "I had a customer once who claimed her steak was not cooked correctly....I picked up a knife and cut it open and explained that's the way it's supposed to be."

**a) This is the best answer. This answer is clearly explains a situation and the action you took to resolve the situation.**

### 11) What is a weakness?

a) "I get really frustrated with my co-workers when they whine about everything."

b) "I don't 'toot my own horn'. I like to go in and get the job done and I don't dwell on who gets credit."

c) "I don't think I have a weakness."

**a) This is the best answer. This answer diplomatically states the importance of looking at someone's individual capabilities and determining if they apply to the open positions. It also identifies two critical skills applicable to almost any position.**

### 12) What was your GPA? Why is it low?

a) My GPA is 2.8. basically because I had a lot of fun in college.

b) My GPA is 2.8 because I held a full time job while in college, working my way through school. It is not reflective of my ability to do the job.

c) My GPA is 2.8 which I don't think is too low, at least compared to my friends.

**b) This is the best answer. This shows you have given some thought to your college GPA and are aware of what influenced it outside of the classroom. The more involved and busy you were during college the more likely the employer will accept a lower GPA**

### 13) What are you looking for in a position?

a) "I'm looking for an opportunity to apply my skills and contribute to the growth of the company while helping create some advancement opportunities for myself."

b) "I'm looking for an organization that will appreciate my contributions and reward my efforts."

c) "I'm looking for a position that will allow me to make enough money to support my lifestyle. I am a hard worker and will give a concerted effort to earn the money I need."

**a) This is the best answer. This answer shows ambition, willingness to work for opportunity, and a desire to work for a dynamic organization. In this response you have energy and confidence.**

#### **14) How would co-workers describe you?**

a) "They perceive me as a leader. The people who have worked with me learned great deal and accomplished, in many cases, more than they thought possible."

b) "My employees would tell you they got direction when they needed and the room to work when it was appropriate. I believe a measure of a good manager is how much he is able to get done through others."

c) "They perceive me as someone who cared about them personally and had high expectations. I get a great deal of satisfaction from helping others do their best. My former employees would highlight three of my priorities which are to build loyalty and a team environment, obtain results and develop people."

**c) This is the best answer. This answer depicts a manager who cares about people but is keenly focused on productivity. This answer give clear examples of important aspects of one management style which is largely accepted.**

#### **15) What did you like and dislike about college?**

a) "I didn't like the tremendous amount of homework some professors assigned us. I liked those professors who realized I had a life outside of class."

b) "I liked the opportunity to be involved on campus. It was a small campus that allowed students to take responsibility, organize events and be a part of the planning team. I can't really think of anything I disliked, college was a wonderful experience."

c) "I liked having Wednesdays off. I think the thing I disliked most was living in the dorms."

**b) This is the best answer. It is positive, demonstrates your ability to juggle several things at once and shows your commitment to get involved.**

**16) Are you willing to relocate?**

a) "No."

b) "I'm open to opportunities within the company so if that involves relocation I would consider it."

c) "I'd move, but I know your headquarters is in Alaska and that's too cold for me."

**b) This is the best answer. It leaves the options open without making a definite decision.**

## The Interview

Resumes and cover letters are designed to get an interview. The interview is a conversation with a purpose that is an opportunity to provide and evaluate information. Your role is to provide adequate and accurate information to assist the interviewer in evaluating your skills, education, experiences, goals, objectives and personality for the position in question. You should also listen and obtain information from the interviewer about the employer, the position, the work environment and the company.

An interview is designed to exchange information. You have approximately 30 minutes to convince the interviewer that you have the skills, education, and experience to be successful in the position. Know yourself, your goals, your objectives and your skills. The interviewer will evaluate your self-confidence, motivation, attitudes, skills, knowledge, experience, initiative and responsibility. Remember that the interviewer is comparing you to an "ideal" candidate. Be positive! Much of the success of your interview will depend on your attitude and appearance. Arrive for the interview at least 10 minutes early and be appropriately dressed, neat and clean.

Be prepared to discuss the organization, job responsibilities, operations, policies, your career objectives, and whether you are willing to relocate. Only the interviewer should bring up salary and benefits. Take note-taking materials to the interview and don't be afraid to jot things down during the session, though don't become so immersed in your note-taking that you ignore the interviewer. During the close, express a sincere interest in the job and leave knowing who contacts whom.

Prepare yourself for an interview:

- Know the exact location of the interview and don't be late.
- Research on the company to show your knowledge of the companies operations.
- Record the interviewer's name and know how to pronounce it.
- Prepare questions for the interviewer.
  - How old is the company?
  - Who are its competitors?
  - What sort of training programs does it provide?
  - If I am hired, what type of environment will I be working in?

Follow these guidelines during any interview:

- Don't be late.
- Check your appearance before greeting the interviewer.
- There may be more than one interviewer present. Use the interviewers' last names until they allow first names.
- Introduce yourself in a confident manner and express your interest in being there.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Remain standing until offered a seat.

- Sit erect, not rigid, with your arms in your lap.
- Use your voice and gestures to communicate enthusiasm.
- Avoid being sidetracked from the topic at hand.
- Avoid answering questions in a negative manner and maintain a pleasant demeanor.
- Avoid negative conversation, especially about past employment - always be positive!
- When finished, shake hands again and thank the interviewers for their time and consideration. This is a good moment to ask when you might expect to be hearing from them again, or if they would prefer you to get back to them.

Employers often cite the following as reasons for not considering a candidate:

- Sloppy resume, letters, or application form.
- Late for interview.
- Poor personal appearance.
- Lack of eye contact during interview.
- Extreme nervousness, often characterized by talking too much.
- Lack of confidence and poise.
- Timid, introverted, non-assertive.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm, passive, or indifferent.
- Failure to participate fully in the interview process.
- Inability to express oneself, poor diction, poor grammar.
- Lack of career planning, no goals or no objectives.
- Over-emphasis on money, interested only in offer.
- Unwilling to start at bottom, expected too much, too soon.
- Ill-mannered, not courteous.
- Overbearing, conceited, know-it-all-attitude.
- Made excuses, evasive on unfavorable factors in record.
- Asked no questions about the job.
- Lack of knowledge about the employer.
- Indefinite response to questions.
- Questionable long-term potential for advancement.
- Unwilling to relocate.

If you're not sure why you were rejected, contact the employer or interviewer who rejected you and ask them for help. Be very tactful and tell them you are calling to improve yourself and your job search abilities.

## **Job Applicant Interview Script**

When the applicant arrives, put him or her at ease using a friendly, businesslike attitude. Let the applicant know that you're glad that they've come and that you have set aside sufficient uninterrupted time to conduct the interview. You can start the interview with chatter about hobbies, interests, etc., if you are comfortable doing so and are confident that you can stay away from personal questions that might be considered discriminatory. Or you can simply ask one of the following questions:

"How did you happen to become interested in our organization?"

"How did you hear of the opening?"

Depending on the response, you can work in an overview of what you have planned.

"Before we start, let me give you some idea of what I'd like to cover today. I want to review your background and experience so that I can decide whether the job is suited to your talents and interests. So, I'd like to hear about your job, education, interests, outside activities, and anything else you'd like to tell me. And after we have covered your background, I want to give you information about our organization and the job, and answer any questions that you might have."

### **Work Experience**

A discussion of work experience should vary widely based, in part, on how long the applicant has been employed. Questions appropriate to a recent high school or college graduate will make little sense when interviewing a professional with 15 years of experience. For an applicant with substantial experience, a reasonable starting point would be a discussion of the most recent position. In addition to focusing on the jobs themselves, it might also be helpful to discuss why the applicant has changed jobs in the past, the duration of each prior employment, chronological gaps in employment, etc. The following script would be appropriate when interviewing someone who has not been working long.

"A good place to start would be your work experience."

"I'm interested in the jobs you've held, what your duties and responsibilities were, your likes and dislikes, and what you felt you may have gained from them."

"Let's start with a brief review of your first work experiences, those you might have had part-time during school or during the summer, and then we'll concentrate on your more recent jobs in more detail."

"What do you remember about your very first job?"

Select specific follow-up questions for each job and move forward chronologically. It's been suggested that you move forward chronologically because there's a more natural conversational flow and you can see patterns of behavior emerge.

Your follow-up questions should ask for specific examples of behavior, not general or hypothetical responses. Don't ask "Are you dependable?" because all you will get in response is a "Yes."

Instead, say, "Tell me about a day you got to work on time, only because of extra effort." It is focused on specific examples of behavior. Similarly, instead of asking, "Are you organized?" say "Tell me about a time when your organizational skills made a project successful" or "How did you organize your work in your last position? How did you handle the unexpected?"

Ask specific, clear questions one at a time and let the applicant answer uninterrupted. Resist filling in every lull in the conversation; wait to see if the applicant will do so.

Avoid either verbally or physically giving the applicant a clue as to how you regard their answers; remain neutral.

To draw the applicant out without revealing what you're thinking, try using his or her own words. If the candidate says, "I like to work independently," you could respond with "Independently?" Of course, you could also use the opportunity to ask the applicant to give an example of what he or she did working independently.

After you have covered the applicant's work experience, you could move on to education.

## **Education**

As in the case of the work experience portion of the interview, the education discussion must be tailored to suit the applicant's educational level. The sample interview that follows would be appropriate for a younger applicant who has not been out of high school for any length of time. When interviewing for a professional position, the focus would shift to the professional education.

"You've given me a good review of your work experience—now let's talk about your education. Why don't we start with high school briefly and then cover more recent schooling and any specialized on the job training you may have had. I'm interested in the subjects you preferred, your grades, extracurricular activities, and anything else of importance."

"What was high school like for you?"

Select specific follow-up questions for each educational experience and move forward

chronologically. Don't necessarily accept answers at face value. Chronology reveals patterns. Take the information and patterns of behavior that you're being told and analyze them in terms of the performance skills you determined that you needed before the interview began.

### **Activities and Interests**

"Turning to the present, I'd like to give you the opportunity to mention some of your interests and activities outside of work—hobbies, what you do for fun and relaxation, any community activities, professional associations, or anything else you'd like to mention that you think might be relevant to our job. What would you like to mention?"

Select specific follow-up questions.

Show interest and attention, as well as respect for the applicant. Don't talk down. Do use an appropriate language level.

### **Self-Assessment**

"Now let's try to summarize our conversation. Thinking about all we've covered today, what would you say are some of your strengths—qualities both personal and professional that make you a good prospect for any employer?"

Select specific follow-up questions as needed.

"You've given me some real assets, and now I'd like to hear about areas you'd like to develop further—all of us have qualities we'd like to change or improve. What are some of yours?"

Select specific follow-up questions as needed.

### **Transition to Information-Giving Phase**

If you are still interested in the applicant, proceed to this phase of the interview. On the other hand, if you have already decided that the applicant isn't suitable, there isn't much point in describing a position that the applicant won't be filling.

"You've given me a good review of your background and experience, and I have enjoyed talking with you. Before we turn to my review of our organization, and the job, is there anything else about your background you would like to cover?"

"Do you have any specific questions or concerns before I give you information about the job and the opportunities here?"

All right, now I have some information I'd like to give you."

Review the organization, the job, benefits, location, etc.

Tailor your presentation as appropriate to your interest in the candidate.

## **Closing**

"Do you have any other questions about us, the job, or anything else?"

Close the interview graciously. If you have already decided not to offer the applicant a job, you can let them know at this point. Do so cordially and uncritically; you needn't be specific about why you've rejected the candidate.

"I've enjoyed talking with you today, but we won't be able to offer you this position."

If you think that you would consider the applicant for another position in the future, say so. You've already spent the time on an interview.

If pressed for a reason why an applicant won't be offered a job, you always have the option of telling the applicant that you do not discuss the reasons for your hiring decisions. Or, you may explain that, for example, you have already interviewed other, more qualified applicants. Use your judgment, realizing that it can create a very awkward situation if you merely tell an applicant that he or she is "unqualified" or "lacking experience." Be honest, but don't be confrontational.

If you've found a promising candidate, you can continue.

"What is your level of interest in us at this point?"

Explore any doubts or reservations the applicant might have.

"Let me review what the next steps are."

Let the applicant know what's likely to happen next, whether another interview will be needed, and how long it will be before a decision is made.

"I want to thank you for coming today...."

## Mock Interview Checklist

|   | YES | NO  |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Demonstrate ability to follow established rules by arriving promptly for the interview.            | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Began interview with a friendly greeting and a handshake.  | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Gave resume to interviewer.  | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Expressed self clearly.  | ___ | ___ |
| 5. Described relevant educational background, qualifications or experience.                           | ___ | ___ |
| 6. Emphasized what he/she had to offer the company rather than what the company had to offer him/her. | ___ | ___ |
| 7. Avoided mentioning personal weakness or making Negative statements.                                | ___ | ___ |
| 8. Asked questions pertaining to the job, the company, and/or working conditions.                     | ___ | ___ |
| 9. Showed interest and enthusiasm for the position.   | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Responded appropriately to criticism.   | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Showed respect and cordiality.  | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Exited interview in a friendly manner and with a thank you.                                       | ___ | ___ |
| 13. Appeared well groomed, neat and clean.  | ___ | ___ |
| 14. Was appropriately dressed.  | ___ | ___ |
| 15. Appeared self-confident.  | ___ | ___ |
| 16. Used appropriate grammar.   | ___ | ___ |
| 17. Controlled hands, legs and facial movements.  | ___ | ___ |
| 18. Maintained good eye contact.  | ___ | ___ |
| 19. Appeared to be in good health.  | ___ | ___ |
| 20. Demonstrated good posture.  | ___ | ___ |

