



# Job Search Tips

*Prepared by*

**Skills Canada**  
**National Technical Committee**  
**for Job Search**

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# Skills assessment

*According to the Conference Board of Canada, you require the following skills to be successful in the world of work:*

**Fundamental skills:** The skills needed as a base for further development. Examples include communication, managing information, think and solving problem.)

**Personal management skills:** The personal skills, attitudes and behaviours that drive one's potential for growth. For example being responsible, adaptable, learning continuously and working safely.

**Teamwork skills:** The skills and attributes needed to contribute productively. These include working with others and participating in projects and tasks.

**Identifying your skills** is an important component of the job search process. Without clearly knowing what you can do, you will not have the ability to communicate those skills effectively to an employer. Much like a salesperson cannot sell a product without fully understanding its features, job seekers cannot sell their skills without identifying exactly what they are. You need to know your technical skills and your transferable skills.

We all have **transferable skills** to offer an employer. The best part about transferable skills is that we gain them from a number of experiences. When reviewing these words, examine your experiences from school, work, sports, and volunteer work. You can "transfer" these experiences from job to job.

## Preparing your résumé

### What is a good résumé?

- A self-marketing tool
- Designed with one goal in mind: **to get you a job interview**
- Often starts with a clearly stated **job objective**
- Presents your skills, experience, and accomplishments in terms of your current **job objective**

## A good résumé includes:

1. A clearly stated **job objective**
2. A **highlights of qualifications** section
3. A presentation of directly relevant **skills** and **experience**
4. A listing of relevant **education** and **training**
5. A chronological **work history**
6. A brief description of **volunteer experience**, a listing of memberships in associations and a summary of awards achieved
7. An **interests** and **activities** section

## Résumé types

### Chronological

- Lists job titles, company names, dates of employment, responsibilities/major tasks in reverse chronological order, beginning with the most recent first
- Preferred by employers
- Highlights achievements and experience
- Includes **highlights of qualifications/skills summary**

### Functional (skill-based)

- Emphasizes skills and abilities rather than experience
- Used for those changing careers or re-entering the workforce
- Section titles focus on skills and achievements

### Combination

- Combines elements of both functional and chronological résumés
- Describes work experience in functional areas in reverse chronological order

### Electronic

- Used when posting your résumé on a website, job board or as an e-mail attachment
- Also used when résumés are electronically scanned
- Avoid the use of impressive fonts and formatting
- Match keywords to the job description

# Tips for students with no work experience

## **Informal ways that you can acquire marketable skills:**

- Working on a school paper or yearbook (researching, editing, writing, selling ads)
- Working as a student intern for a business
- Serving on student government committees
- Babysitting
- Coaching sports or tutoring academic subjects
- Winning recognition for an exceptionally good essay, report, or project; i.e. Skills Canada, e-Spirit, school contest
- Helping a teacher research background information for a book
- Photography, science or marketing projects
- Helping to promote a concert
- Helping put a band together
- Assisting with church activities
- Leadership in a club or camp



# Sample résumé – combined functional

## John B. Goode

123 Main Street, Anywhere, Ontario N1S 4J9  
jgoode@conestogac.on.ca (519) 623-1234

### JOB OBJECTIVE

A **job objective** is optional. It is tailored to the specific job for which you are applying. It should be brief and demonstrate what you can do for your employer.

### SKILLS SUMMARY

(or **SUMMARY OF SKILLS** or **HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS**)

- List your **technical skills** in bullet-point form
- Skills that support your ability to perform the type of work to which you are applying
- Mention any experience you have that is relevant to the job
- Be concise and to the point
- Mention software packages, processes, concepts, languages, equipment with which you are familiar

### EDUCATION

*Program name and school 2003–2006*

- Expected date of graduation: December 2006 (omit this if graduated)

*Program highlights*

- Make sure that whatever you decide to put in here does not repeat anything that you have already said in your **summary of skills**
- Do not list all the courses you have taken, just a few pertinent topics

### DEMONSTRATED SKILLS AND ABILITIES

*Communication/interpersonal*

- Prepared various written reports to assist department with contract proposals
- Effectively assisted dissatisfied customers with the return of merchandise
- Use action verbs to describe your accomplishment

When using a **combined functional** résumé, it is important to look at the “big picture” (i.e., include volunteer work, part time employment and class projects to show how you have demonstrated this particular skill)

*Technical skills*

- Complete electrical drawings for power and control system applications using CAD
- Solid understanding of strength of materials,
- Effectively participated in group project including design, programming and installation of automated system

*Computer applications*

- Prepared specifications information sheet using macros on Excel
- Be specific about the way in which you are able to use various computer applications

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

- Wait Staff at the Scarecrow Bar and Grill, Courage, Ontario 2000–present
- Retail Sales Clerk, East Witch Bicycles, Bytown, Ontario, 1999–2000
- Animal Attendant at the Monkey Zoo, Oz, Ontario, summer 2000 and 2001

**VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

If you have numerous volunteer experiences, you may want a whole section of your résumé dedicated to these experiences. Treat it exactly the same as your work history, except indicate your position as volunteer animal attendant.

- Of special interest for the employer would be hobbies that are related to the type of work you want to do

**REFERENCES**

Available upon request\*

\*Always ask the person you want to use as a reference and get their permission before you list them in your résumé.

# Writing effective cover letters

- Often employers consider the cover letter to be more indicative of a person's abilities than the résumé.
- Some employers arrange interviews based solely on the contents of the cover letter.
- Why? The applicant's communication skills (the ability to convey thoughts, ideas and information) are proven in the cover letter. Also, many people have professionals write their résumé, yet most people compose their own cover letters.
- Consider that the cover letter is the first introduction of yourself to the prospective employer and is therefore very important.
- If your cover letter does not capture the interest of the employer, there is a good chance that they will either only glance at your résumé, or not read it at all.
- Each cover letter should be tailored specifically to the job or employer.

## Cover letter types

### Solicited cover letter

- A letter written in response to an advertised position
- The easiest type of letter to write, the advertisement will contain skills and abilities that you need to address in the second paragraph
- The most important paragraph in this type of letter is the second paragraph. In this paragraph you must restate and expand on the skills or "key words" that the employer indicated as being important in the advertisement

### Unsolicited cover letter

- This is a letter written to a company in the hopes that they have an opening, or will have in the future.
- In this type of letter, the first paragraph is the most important.
- You must capture the employer's attention right away; prior research must be done
- It is imperative that you indicate in the first paragraph that you know something about the company or organization - in other words, why them?
- Use names if you can, but ensure that this person is a good reference to use, and that you have their permission.
- Often announcements in the newspaper are a good way to gain awareness of an organization.



# Job interview success

## Stages of the interview

**Introduction:** Introductions, handshake, small talk and review of the process

**Review:** Questions about your skills and abilities – why, how, when, where? Listen carefully. Ask questions. Observe the interviewer.

**Conclusion:** An interviewer will often signal the end of the interview and provide you with an opportunity to ask questions. If the interviewer does not provide you with the next step - ask. Thank them. Ask each interviewer for their business card. Shake hands. Express your interest in the position.

Your past behaviour is a good predictor of your future behaviour. That is the idea behind **behaviour-based interviewing**.

Behaviour-based interviewing is a popular and effective interviewing technique that requires the interviewee to answer questions using specific examples of their actions from their past working experiences. An interviewer using this interview style will be phrasing their questions like this:

### “Tell me about a time when...”

In order to fully answer these types of questions, remember the acronym:

**B** **Background** of the story

**A** The **action** you took

**R** The **results** of your action

# Post-interview tips

**Evaluate yourself by making notes of questions and responses.**

## **Write a thank you letter**

- Should be sent (fax, email) or dropped off in person within 24 hours of your interview
- Shows your appreciation for the opportunity to meet with the employer
- Include any details (skills and qualifications) that you forgot to mention
- Reference something interesting/new you learned about the company during the interview
- Be brief

## **Follow-up with employer**

- Reminds an employer who you are and the position for which you applied
- May create an impression that will influence them for future hiring (if you weren't their first choice)
- Reinforces your genuine interest in the job

**If you are not the successful candidate, ask for feedback.**

# Preparing a portfolio

## **Why a portfolio?**

- Proves your capabilities and talents in a convincing manner
- Presents your career as a catalogue of work, rather than chronological steps on a career ladder
- Makes the hiring decision easier for the employer
- Provides an alternative to checking references
- Shows the transferability of your skills
- Portfolio can be changed or regrouped to target a specific job
- Allows you more control in the interview
- Secures promotions more easily when portfolio evidence of your contributions is supplied
- Assists in refreshing your memory about activities where you showed exceptional performance

## What to include in your portfolio

In a new, attractive binder, and using page protectors (you wouldn't want to ruin your originals), arrange your portfolio documents in related groups. Things you might include:

- Educational certificate/diploma/degree
- Program outline and course descriptions
- Licenses (vocational)
- Grants or scholarships secured for schooling
- Formal test results
- Teacher evaluations (for recent grads)
- Samples of exemplary work
- Transcripts/report cards
- Letters of written reference
- Thank you letters from previous experiences

## References

Sooner or later in your job search, you are going to be asked to provide the names of three or more people who will act as a reference for you. In normal instances, the recruiter is looking for verbal references from people who know what type of an employee you are. You may also want to include a reference from a volunteer experience and one from school.

### Get permission

You **must** request permission to use a person's name as a reference. It is a good idea to contact these people to re-acquaint yourself with them.

### Give them something to work with

Make sure the people you are using as references know about your current, as well as past, activities. Inform them of the type of work you are now looking for. To avoid a possible unpleasant surprise, it is a good idea to ask what your reference plans to say about you.

### Choose the right people

In order for a reference to be meaningful, the people acting as references should be able to answer the question: "Knowing what you know about \_\_\_\_\_, would you hire him/her?" The people best able to answer this question are past/present supervisors and managers. If you are working and do not want your current employer to know you are looking, do not use them as a reference (unless required).

### **Provide details on your references**

When you list your references, give the name of the person, his/her job title, place of employment, address and phone number (including extension). It's best to use a work phone number. Most recruiters will be contacting your references during normal business hours.

### **Follow-up with your references**

Once you have landed the perfect job, remember to thank your references. You should phone your references, thank them for their time and kind words, and let them know that you have found a job.

## **Job search**

### **Tips for effective networking**

- Networking starts at home. Tell friends, relatives and acquaintances what you are looking for
- All contacts are important. Your neighbor, roommate or teacher could lead you to the right connection.
- Try to have your contact introduce you to the person you want to meet. The meeting will go more smoothly and your new contact will likely show more interest.
- Prepare for each meeting. Be able to tell people what you do in a simple, interesting way. Rehearse questions about the industry, jobs you could do and other contacts you could make.
- Keep careful notes. Include name, address, phone number, data, details of conversation and names of other leads.
- Join a professional or community organization. Get involved in activities that let your personality and skills shine through.
- Go to social and business events and mingle. Networking doesn't happen just because you are physically there.
- Volunteering can help you acquire both experience and job related skills. It's a way to try out different types of jobs and puts you in touch with a new set of people.
- Leave a résumé only if you are asked
- Collect business cards. On the back, record the data, occasion, what you talked about and why you were interested.
- Don't automatically accept everything you hear. It's one person's perspective.
- Show your appreciation. Write thank you notes to everyone who helps you. Give key contacts regular progress reports.

# Strategies for an effective job search

## Using your time wisely

- Set an overall goal and priorities
- Break it down into more manageable goals
- Decide your best time of day planning (morning, afternoon, evening)
- Decide on the type(s) of business you wish to apply to using resources such as the phone book, industry directory, Internet, etc.
- Know your limit and don't over commit yourself
- Use a calendar, a "to do" list, or job search planners to record dates and notes

## Using the telephone

Follow these steps in preparing your telephone contacts:

- Make a list of the people you want to contact each day from your master list. For example, make a list of five individuals you intend to call within a given time.
- Reread everything in your files about the organization. Your research will pay off. Make note of key words and phrases that will help you to communicate. You don't want to read your information, but a script will help you remember what to say.
- Practice what you want to say in advance. This includes what you want to leave as a voice message.
- Be sure you know the name and title of the person you wish to reach.
- Remember that the purpose of the call is to meet with the prospective employer. Do **not** try to interview the employer over the phone.
- Pick up the phone and go! Make all the calls you can in one sitting. Stop for no more than five minutes between each call to review what happened in the previous call and to plan your strategy for the next one.

# Internet job search and career websites

## Job search

Apprentice Search	<a href="http://www.apprenticesearch.com">www.apprenticesearch.com</a>
Aviation Canada	<a href="http://www.avcanada.ca">www.avcanada.ca</a>
Canada IT	<a href="http://www.canadait.com">www.canadait.com</a>
Canada Job Search	<a href="http://www.canadajobsearch.com">www.canadajobsearch.com</a>
Canada Jobs	<a href="http://www.canadajobs.com">www.canadajobs.com</a>
Career Edge	<a href="http://www.careeredge.org">www.careeredge.org</a>
Charity Careers (non-profit)	<a href="http://www.charitycareers.com">www.charitycareers.com</a>
Charity Village (non-profit)	<a href="http://www.charityvillage.com">www.charityvillage.com</a>
Golf Jobs	<a href="http://www.golfjobsCanada.com">www.golfjobsCanada.com</a>
Hi Tech Career Exchange	<a href="http://www.hightechcareer.com">www.hightechcareer.com</a>
IT Harvest	<a href="http://www.itharvest.com">www.itharvest.com</a>
Job Bus	<a href="http://www.jobbus.com">www.jobbus.com</a>
Job Options	<a href="http://www.joboptions.com">www.joboptions.com</a>
Job Profiles (research)	<a href="http://www.jobprofiles.org">www.jobprofiles.org</a>
Job Seekers	<a href="http://www.jobseekers.com">www.jobseekers.com</a>
Media Job Search Canada	<a href="http://www.mediajobsearchCanada.com">www.mediajobsearchCanada.com</a>
Monster Board	<a href="http://www.monster.ca">www.monster.ca</a>
Work Site Canada	<a href="http://www.worksiteCanada.com">www.worksiteCanada.com</a>
WorkinfoNet	<a href="http://www.workinfoNet.ca">www.workinfoNet.ca</a>
Working Canada	<a href="http://working.Canada.com">http://working.Canada.com</a>
Workopolis (general public site)	<a href="http://www.workopolis.com">www.workopolis.com</a>
WorkopolisCampus	<a href="http://www.campus.workopolis.com">www.campus.workopolis.com</a>
Young Entrepreneurs	<a href="http://www.yea.ca">www.yea.ca</a>

## Government sites

Advisory Council on Science and Technology	<a href="http://acst-ccst.gc.ca">http://acst-ccst.gc.ca</a>
Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC)	<a href="http://www.councils.org">www.councils.org</a>
Government of Canada	<a href="http://www.gc.ca">http://www.gc.ca</a>
Industry Canada	<a href="http://strategis.ic.gc.ca">http://strategis.ic.gc.ca</a>
Innovation in Canada	<a href="http://www.innovation.gc.ca/">http://www.innovation.gc.ca/</a>
Public Safety – Workplace Safety	<a href="http://www.safecanada.ca">www.safecanada.ca</a>
Public Service of Canada	<a href="http://jobs.gc.ca">http://jobs.gc.ca</a>
Service Canada	<a href="http://jb-ge.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca">http://jb-ge.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca</a>
Stats Canada	<a href="http://www.statcan.ca">www.statcan.ca</a>
Youth Link	<a href="http://www.youth.gc.ca">www.youth.gc.ca</a>
Workapedia	<a href="http://www.workapedia.ca">www.workapedia.ca</a>

## Job search and career resource links

Canadian Woodworking Magazine	<a href="http://www.canadianwoodworking.com">www.canadianwoodworking.com</a>
IBP Interactive Business Planner (Canada Business Services)	<a href="http://www.cbcs.org/ibp/home_en.cfm">www.cbcs.org/ibp/home_en.cfm</a>
Marketing Magazine	<a href="http://www.marketingmag.ca">www.marketingmag.ca</a>
Motiv8	<a href="http://www.motiv8.com">www.motiv8.com</a>
Scholarships Canada	<a href="http://www.scholarshipscanada.com">www.scholarshipscanada.com</a>
School Finder	<a href="http://www.schoolfinder.com">www.schoolfinder.com</a>
Skills for Change	<a href="http://www.skillsforchange.org">www.skillsforchange.org</a>
SuperPages	<a href="http://www.superpages.ca">www.superpages.ca</a>
Techno Skills	<a href="http://www.technoskill.com">www.technoskill.com</a>
Tradeability	<a href="http://www.tradeability.ca">www.tradeability.ca</a>

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