

Rapid Guide to Job Hunting



Triangle South Workforce Area & JobLink Career Centers provide access to a variety of effective career-related resources, including:

- ▶ Assessment of Job Skills and Aptitude
- ▶ Career Counseling and Development
- ▶ Resume and Interviewing Assistance
- ▶ Development of a Personal Employment Plan
- ▶ Full and Part-time Job Listings
- ▶ Job Referrals
- ▶ Job Placement
- ▶ Job Search
- ▶ Career Fairs
- ▶ Vocational Training Programs
- ▶ Labor Market Information
- ▶ Veterans Assistance Programs

www.trianglesouthworkforce.com

Preparing

- ▶ Begin your preparation by taking an inventory of your skills, experience, personality, priorities, likes, dislikes, and financial situation.
- ▶ Find your passion. Remember your best experiences in school, work, and personal life. What skills did you use? What jobs would be similar? Knowing where you are at your best and what you like will push you to get the job and succeed in it.
- ▶ Research current market conditions and job trends by following business news and looking on **www.careeronestop.com**.
- ▶ Narrow your hunt by focusing on a specific industry, then job function, then organization. Compare this to what you found from your research.
- ▶ Focus your research on the company's size, market position, financials, competitors, current and future product plans, growth pattern, organizational structure, challenges, and opportunities.
- ▶ Read the company's annual report (found online or from a broker). One of the best information sources is the CEO's letter, which outlines the organization's direction.
- ▶ Develop a one-minute summary of your experience, skills, talents, and job objective. Be ready to state your summary at any time.
- ▶ Know your life goals. Having a prepared answer signals that you are focused.
- ▶ Determine your bottom-line salary requirement based on living expenses and a cost of living comparison.



Preparing

- ▶ For a current list of great career-related resources, visit **www.selfachievement.com**. Other effective resources include:
 - Vault (www.vault.com)
 - Occupational Informational Network (www.online.onetcenter.org)
 - CareerOneStop (www.careeronestop.com)
 - Reference USA (www.referenceusa.com)
 - USAJOBS (www.usajobs.gov)
 - Opportunity Knocks (www.opportunityknocks.org)
 - www.idealist.org
 - www.h1base.com (job solutions for international students)
 - Hoover's Online
 - *Fortune's* list of 500 biggest U.S. companies
 - *Business Week's* 100 best small U.S. companies
 - *Inc.* list of 500 fastest growing U.S. companies
 - *Forbes'* list of best small companies in America
 - *Industry Week's* list of 100 best managed U.S. companies
 - National, local, and trade specific publications available on the Internet or at the local library. (Trade-specific publications are the best source for targeted information.)
 - Directory of Executive Recruiters
 - Dun & Bradstreet (www.dnb.com)
 - Membership directories of associations and alumni programs
 - Trade shows (You can often get a free pass to the exhibit hall.)
 - Standard & Poor's ratings of Corporations, Directors, and Executives

Preparing

▶ Prepare short stories of job-related accomplishments to use in the interview.

▶ Stay in contact with your network. Send articles, notes – anything to keep connections open. These are your best sources for job leads when needed.

▶ Core Networking Groups to use:

- Current or former co-workers, clients, and customers
- Family, friends, acquaintances, and neighbors
- Those who consider you a customer – doctor, accountant, insurance dealer, financial advisor, etc.
- Professional or trade organizations
- Fellow alumni or faculty members
- Members of your church or volunteer groups
- People you meet in new settings – parties, trips, etc



▶ Remember the cliché, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” Modify it to include who you *can* know. Think about who knows the people you want to know and how to include them in your network.

▶ Let your contact know of your successes in getting an interview or job based on a referral they provided. They will be more likely to provide another referral if they know you were successful.

Resumes

Visit **www.selfachievement.com** for a free resume building course and sample resumes.

▶ The average resume is glanced at for only 10 seconds – yours must have immediate impact.

▶ Use sentence fragments or bullet points to provide focus.

▶ Place the most important information at the beginning and end of the resume.

▶ Focus on what the employer wants to hear – not necessarily on what you want to say. If it won't be important to them, leave it out.

▶ Include contact information, education, professional experience, work related activities, and other qualifications (certifications, interests, accomplishments).

▶ Job objective, if used, should cover three points: job title, industry and three key skills you are likely to use.

▶ List job experiences in calendar order starting with your most recent. Place your best accomplishments at the beginning of each job description.

▶ Include accomplishments, honors, teamwork, challenges you overcame, ability to work without supervision, and success in applying a creative solution to a company problem.

▶ Create uniqueness. How have you achieved outstanding results by doing your job differently?

▶ Provide examples of measurable results showing your positive impact on the organization's time and money as in the following examples: achieved 120% of quota, saved \$240,000, increased revenues 12%, saved three months on a project.



Resumes

- ▶ Make sure previous job titles and responsibilities are recognizable. If it is a job code like “E01,” create an appropriate job title and put it in parentheses beside it.
- ▶ Use action words and verbs to describe your previous work: words such as *launched*, *initiated*, *accomplished*, *achieved*, *consolidated*, and *repositioned*.
- ▶ Use highlights, underlines, bolding, and italics to emphasize your best results.
- ▶ Paper resumes are often scanned into electronic format so use simple fonts and formatting, black ink only, and no funny icons or clip art.
- ▶ In addition to job skills, list personality traits that will make you successful in the sought-after job, for example: *dependable*, *creative*, *driven*.
- ▶ Have someone else edit your resume for errors. Make sure there are no mistakes.
- ▶ Stick to one or two pages unless you have more significant information to share.
- ▶ Computers are often used to read resumes for key words, including job functions, other company or product names, and job titles. Include as many of these as possible along with any industry-specific acronyms, so your resume will register on these searches.
- ▶ Make a final review of your resume focusing on your implied value in relation to your desired job. Make sure you are showing what you *can do* as well as what you have done.



Cover Letters

Your cover letter is often the first contact you make with an employer, so it is very important that it makes a good impression. This letter is a direct reflection of you, your skills, your attitude, and your personality.

► Suggestions:

- Keep it to one page in length.
- Print on good quality paper that matches your resume and envelope.
- Use a font style and size identical to that on your resume.
- Make your letters easy to read, attractive, and action-oriented.
- Edit carefully for spelling, grammar, and punctuation – keep it error-free.
- Design cover letters to be work-centered and employer focused.
- Address the letter directly to a specific person, not “Human Resources Department.”
- Don’t be cute, humorous, or over-confident – be direct and sound enthusiastic.
- Customize it to the position of interest.
- Read the organization’s job postings and business overview looking for two specific things they need. Mention those briefly by highlighting your matching skills.
- Avoid rehashing materials from your resume, and highlight your overall value.



Hunting

- ▶ Organize interviews, notes, and follow-ups in a calendar and notebook.
- ▶ The top four sources for jobs are people you know, referrals, direct contact with company decision makers, and the Internet. Referrals are the most successful method.
- ▶ Find a connection to someone in the organization who can refer you. Don't be afraid to ask for a referral, because the person may get a recruiting bonus or a pat on the back for helping the organization grow.
- ▶ Check classified ads in trade magazines, journals, and on the Internet. Be aware that most jobs are not advertised in the newspaper.
- ▶ When answering ads, build your response or cover letter on the specific qualifications listed, responding to each qualification you possess.
- ▶ Job hunting is a numbers game. You may get only a 5-10% response rate, so you will need to knock on many doors to find your job.
- ▶ If possible, deliver your resume in person. You may get a short interview on the spot.
- ▶ Try to find a recruiter specializing in your particular industry.
- ▶ Use recruiting firms to discuss industry trends or company specifics before interviewing directly with the company.
- ▶ Most recruiting agencies are paid by the employer. Make sure you are not faced with any surprise fees.
- ▶ If you are perceived as a hot recruit, expect a lot of attention from employers. If you do not get the desired attention, change your approach, resume, or interviewing techniques to appear more marketable.



Hunting

▶ If a recruiter calls about an opportunity that does not interest you, be polite and try to recommend a friend. Always keep a good relationship as they may have your perfect opportunity later.

▶ If you find an opening listed by a recruiting agency do not limit yourself to that one position when you call. Ask about similar opportunities by other recruiters in the agency.

▶ Send your cover letter, resume, and job requirements directly to a recruiter to whom you have been referred or who works in your particular industry.

▶ Make sure your recruiter will only send your resume to an organization after contacting you first. Multiple resumes for the same opportunity can raise issues on placement fees.

▶ Learn about the company's culture. About 70% of employees being fired are the result of a cultural mismatch with the company.

▶ Getting turned down for one job does not mean you can't get another one at the same company—keep trying.

▶ In the job hunt, persistence and passion will most often win over brains and talent.

▶ Use your list of successes, skills, and accomplishments as affirmation of your success and keep a positive attitude.

▶ Use visualizations. See yourself enjoying success in the job you want. It will keep you working on attaining that goal.

▶ Attend job fairs to learn about careers and the local job market.



Interviewing

Make sure to visit **www.selfachievement.com** and complete the free interview preparation course in the Interview Center.

- ▶ If you are working with an employment agency or recruiting firm, ask them to give you a practice interview with feedback.
- ▶ In the actual interview, demonstrate your skills associated with the job. For example, for a sales job, demonstrate closing skills; for a programming job, demonstrate analytical skills.
- ▶ If you lack direct work experience for a qualification, provide an example of something you have done through volunteer work, a class you have taken, or a project you have completed.
- ▶ Good interviewers ask specific questions to assess your specific skills, traits, and attitudes. Take a second to think about what they are really asking before responding.
- ▶ Most interviewers have “required” and “desired” qualifications against which they are evaluating you. Understand what they are.
- ▶ Show positive candidate characteristics:
 - Passionate about the industry, job, company
 - Flexible thinker
 - Ability to think about products in new ways
 - Ability to prioritize and use resources appropriately
 - Goal-oriented
 - Self-motivated
 - Persuasive
 - Self-confident
 - Team player
 - Positive personality
 - Inquiring mind with good questions



Interviewing

- ▶ Limit negative candidate characteristics:
 - No research on organization, job, or industry
 - No questions
 - Unable to discuss industry issues
 - Dependent on others
 - Overconfident
- ▶ People respond favorably to those who seem to like them, so show genuine interest in the interviewers and make them feel special.
- ▶ First impressions are lasting. Establishing a good impression in the first 60 seconds can carry you through the entire hiring process.
- ▶ Plan what you will do and say at the end of the interview to create a lasting impression.
- ▶ As appropriate, bring examples of your work to the interview: drawings, proposals, awards, and internal notes congratulating you for good work.
- ▶ Find out the appropriate interview dress code by asking the interview coordinator, recruiter, or company human resources department.
- ▶ Inspect your wardrobe for the interview the day before. Wrinkles, unpolished shoes, torn pants, and missing buttons all signal your lack of attention to details.
- ▶ Arrive at the interview early enough to review your resume and notes.



Interviewing

- ▶ Try to spend 50% of the interview listening and 50% talking.
- ▶ Immediately before you enter the waiting area for the interview, mentally prepare by visualizing yourself having an outstanding interview. Feel confident as you enter the room and make your first impression.
- ▶ Be polite to everyone you encounter at the office. You never know who is involved in the evaluation process.
- ▶ Know the individual job requirements and explain how your qualifications exceed each of them.
- ▶ Your first interview will often be a screening interview by office staff to verify the facts of your resume, obtain additional information, and check your communication skills.
- ▶ Try to get access to the actual decision-maker as soon as possible.
- ▶ A second “selection” interview may be with someone closer to the job you will be performing. This interview will be more probing and focused. You passed the qualification test and are now being evaluated for personality and cultural fit.
- ▶ The interview is generally a distraction to the interviewer’s daily tasks, so be direct and respectful of time.



Interview Follow-Up

- ▶ During telephone interviews the interviewer has only your voice to draw conclusions about you. Schedule a time for these when you can focus, talk freely, and show enthusiasm.
- ▶ Keep business cards and write notes on the back of the card about your connection with the contact, what you discussed, and where you met.
- ▶ Follow up with an email or note of thanks to each person reviewing your interests and qualifications. Think of this as one more chance to sell yourself.
- ▶ In follow-up calls, quickly recap your information as the person may not remember your name and information.
- ▶ Each interview is practice for the next. Immediately take notes on what you were asked and how you could do better.
- ▶ Make a simple “Evaluation Form” for what you thought of the interview and the job. Fill it out while it is fresh in your mind.
- ▶ Use your list of skills and accomplishments as affirmation of your success and have a positive attitude.



Interview Questions

Expect these questions and plan answers that give the right message:

- ▶ Tell me about yourself.
- ▶ Tell me about a challenge you faced and how you dealt with it.
- ▶ What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- ▶ What do you know about our organization?
- ▶ What do you dislike about your current job and company?
- ▶ Give me the sales pitch you would use for our company and product.
- ▶ Why do you want (or feel qualified for) this job?
- ▶ Describe a project you were involved in from beginning to end.
- ▶ Who do you see as our competition and why?
- ▶ What kinds of people do you work well with (not work well with)?
- ▶ Tell me about a difficult problem and how you solved it.
- ▶ What is your management style?
- ▶ How do you handle pressure?
- ▶ What are your short and long-term goals?
- ▶ What else should I know about you?
- ▶ Be prepared to answer tough questions: Why didn't you graduate from college? Why were you fired? Why have you had so many jobs? Why have you been unemployed for 18 months?



Interview Questions

Questions you should ask:

- ▶ Is this a new position?
- ▶ Why is this position open?
- ▶ How long has this position been open?
- ▶ Who would be my direct supervisor?
- ▶ How would you describe the culture and work environment?
- ▶ What is the initial focus of the job?
- ▶ What are the major responsibilities of this position?
- ▶ What do you see as key qualifications for success in this position?
- ▶ What is a typical career path from this position?
- ▶ What do you see as your company's position in the marketplace?
- ▶ If you are changing careers, explain how your qualifications are transferable from your previous career.
- ▶ Be discreet on why you are leaving your current job. Avoid troublesome issues, such as you can't get along with management or deserve more money.
- ▶ If asked where else you are interviewing be vague. State that you are interested in this job and are well qualified for it or that you are being considered by a number of other organizations.
- ▶ Focus on your accomplishments and qualifications from the preparation process, and find a way to work them into the interview.



Negotiating

▶ Avoid giving salary requirements until you have the job offer. If questioned, give a vague answer like, “By working hard and providing value, my salary has steadily grown along with promotions and responsibilities.”

▶ Don't be the first to name a salary expectation. You may seem too demanding, out of range, or under-qualified.

▶ Salary discussions are best left until after all interviews and when you are being presented with a job offer. You have a much stronger negotiating position after it is determined you are the best person for the job.

▶ Most jobs have salary ranges. What range is authorized for this position? Negotiate within this range, focusing on your worth.

▶ Target your salary within 20% of the company's expected salary range, and be prepared to justify your higher number.

▶ When you discuss salary figures, give a range – your expected salary at the bottom and what you desire at the top. For example \$40,000 – \$50,000: you expect \$40,000 but hope to negotiate higher.

▶ The lower the job level, the lower the negotiability of the salary, because there are generally more qualified applicants for these jobs.

▶ If the offer is unacceptable, don't be afraid to ask directly if that is the best offer the company can make.

▶ Show flexibility. Counter offer instead of rejecting an offer outright.

▶ If you must receive a higher salary than is offered, suggest additional responsibilities to justify the increase in salary, or ask for an earlier performance review and raise.



Negotiating

► Evaluate benefits. They are often one-third of the total compensation value and may be negotiable. Good ones to look for and understand are the following:

- Cafeteria plans or medical/dependent reimbursement plans
- Pension or 401(k)
- Medical, dental, vision insurance
- Profit sharing, employee stock plan
- Signing bonus
- Stock options or performance bonuses
- Life, disability insurance
- Promotion and raise schedule
- Vacation, sick leave, and personal time off
- Flex hours, telecommuting
- Tuition reimbursement
- Company assets – car, computer/laptop, cell phone
- Health club membership
- Relocation expense



Negotiating

- ▶ In a group evaluation, use those you connected with during the interviews to help negotiate for you internally.
- ▶ Make sure to negotiate based on the cost of living where you will be living and working. You can find this information at www.bestplaces.net.
- ▶ Study salaries of comparable jobs with similar companies. Knowing your market value will strengthen your negotiating position.
- ▶ In evaluating offers, consider title, opportunity for advancement, company reputation, culture, commute, and ability to work with your potential manager.
- ▶ Don't accept any offer on the spot. Show interest but ask for time to think it over. Refrain from disclosing your need to discuss the job offer with your spouse. Get the offer in writing.
- ▶ Contact companies with whom you've interviewed. Give them a chance to match the competing offer or top it.



Building Value On The Job

- ▶ Become a source of valuable information and establish contacts throughout your organization. This will enhance your visibility and provide you more control over your job situation.
- ▶ Increase your leverage by developing job skills valued at other organizations.
- ▶ Take advantage of all trade shows and company or partner training to build skills and expand your network.
- ▶ Keep a file of your accomplishments, including letters or emails from managers or others documenting your positive traits and skills.
- ▶ Get exposure to senior management. Be known as a contributor.
- ▶ Establish yourself as a spokesperson for your organization outside of the office. Your job security will greatly increase if you are viewed as a company representative in your community.
- ▶ Build toward promotion. Demonstrate you can do the work one job level above your own.
- ▶ Associate with positive people. They will be the leaders.
- ▶ Understand office politics. Align with the true power in the company, but never be a backstabber. Guard and maintain your integrity.



The Triangle South Workforce Development Board is here to assist you in your job seeking efforts. To find out more visit one of our JobLink Career Centers in the locations listed below:

Lee County:

Employment Security Commission (ESC)
1909 Lee Avenue, Sanford, NC 27330
Telephone: 919-775-2241
Contact: Edith Edmond

Harnett County:

Central Carolina Community College
1137 E. Cornelius Harnett Blvd., Lillington, NC 27546
Telephone: 910-814-4042
Contact: Charlotte Leach

Employment Security Commission
101 Hunt Valley Drive, Dunn, NC 28334
Telephone: 910-891-2915
Contact: David Taylor

Sampson County:

Employment Security Commission (ESC)
115 North Blvd., Clinton, NC 28328
Telephone: 910-592-5756
Contact: Peggy Hunt Davis

Chatham County: (opening September 2010)

Central Carolina Community College, 764 West Street
Pittsboro, NC 27312
Telephone: 919-542-6495



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North Carolina



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