

# Job Seeking Workbook

Support



advocacy



prevention



research

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## Job Seeking Workbook

A guide for people affected by cancer, their carers, families, friends and colleagues

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### Note to reader

This document is intended as a general guide to the topic and should not be seen as a substitute for professional advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of release.



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# Job Seeking Workbook

This resource provides practical guidance for people affected by cancer, including their carers, family and friends to return to work. The job seeking skills review in section 1 will help you to identify which section(s) of this document will be most beneficial to you.

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# Introduction

## Returning to work during or after cancer treatment

Returning to work is associated with improved quality of life and provides social and economic benefits (de Boer et al., 2011; Tamminga et al., 2012; McKay et al., 2012). The longer you are not working, or put off seeking assistance to return to work, it becomes more likely that you may develop long term disability and even lose your job (ASCO, 2012; Boyes et al., 2009; de Boer et al., 2011; Livestrong, 2012; Oeffinger et al., 2006).

If you have been absent from the workforce as a result of cancer treatment, or caring for a loved one, returning to work can be overwhelming. You may need to keep working for financial or personal reasons or to find a new job because of changes to your physical capabilities or having had extended time off work. Some people may decide to reassess their career goals, which may lead them to look for new types of work.

## Common issues

- loss of employment or demotion of employment role
- financial burden due to restricted income
- guilt regarding inability to return to work and/or performing usual role
- lack of knowledge surrounding employment law and rights at work
- concerns surrounding disclosure of cancer experience when returning to work and job seeking
- diminished self-esteem and confidence
- increased need for family and/or close friends to care for the person affected by cancer, to the detriment of their employment and/or career
- employer and peer discrimination

## Issues that may influence a person affected by cancer or their carer returning to work or continuing to work

- how you think your employer (present or future) will help you
- provision of flexible working arrangements
- availability and participation in rehabilitation services and/or counselling
- undertaking education and training
- age, gender
- difficulties with the burden of physical symptoms
- cancer remission
- no sick leave left to access
- continuing to access health care treatment and advice

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## Section 1: Job Seeking Skills Review

Self-assessment of your current job seeking knowledge & skills.

1. How have you found jobs in the past?

- networking (friends/family/colleagues)
- internet (employment agencies/social media)
- newspaper
- yellow Pages®
- employment agency
- Centrelink/Job network
- other

2. Do you have a Job Seeker ID number? YES / NO

If you are unemployed you can register with Centrelink (Department of Human Services) to access its services.

3. Are you registered with any Employment Agencies? YES / NO

4. Do you have current:

- resume (CV) YES / NO
- written references YES / NO
- access to verbal referees YES / NO

5. Are you able to:

- write a cover letter YES / NO
- attend job interviews YES / NO
- call employers YES / NO
- use a computer YES / NO
- use the internet YES / NO
- send emails YES / NO
- use a USB YES / NO

6. What have you done recently to get a job?

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7. Why are you currently not working?

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8. Do you have any specific physical or psychological barriers preventing you from working?

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9. Are you comfortable discussing your cancer experience with an employer?  
YES / NO

10. Do you have childcare needs? YES / NO

11. How would you get to work? (e.g. bus, car etc.)

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12. Do you want full time, part time or casual work?

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13. What types of jobs do you think you can perform?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

14. What types of jobs do you think you cannot perform?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

## Job seeking skills questionnaire

Rate your confidence against the following statements

	Very confident	Confident	OK	Not very confident	Not confident at all
I am ready to return to work	5	4	3	2	1
I am able to overcome my barriers	5	4	3	2	1
I am able to commit to job seeking	5	4	3	2	1
I know what skills I offer employers	5	4	3	2	1
I know the skills required for the type of work I want	5	4	3	2	1
I know how to write a cover letter detailing my skills and abilities	5	4	3	2	1
I know the types of jobs I can apply for	5	4	3	2	1
I can review job advertisements and identify the required criteria	5	4	3	2	1
I can search for jobs and apply online	5	4	3	2	1
I can call employers to seek information & arrange an interview	5	4	3	2	1
I can use email and send attachments	5	4	3	2	1
I can promote my abilities and skills on the telephone	5	4	3	2	1
I am able to identify employers that I can approach for work	5	4	3	2	1
Preparing for a job interview I can:					
Research the job and company	5	4	3	2	1
Be well groomed	5	4	3	2	1
Know which questions may be asked	5	4	3	2	1
When attending an interview I can:					
Make a good first impression	5	4	3	2	1
Answer questions appropriately	5	4	3	2	1
Emphasise my skills and achievements	5	4	3	2	1
Know what to do if I don't understand a question	5	4	3	2	1
Call and request feedback after attending an interview	5	4	3	2	1

Count up how many times you scored: 1 & 2 \_\_\_\_\_ vs 3, 4 & 5 \_\_\_\_\_

More scores in the 1 & 2 section indicate that you may benefit from intensive job seeking skills assistance (refer to Section 5).

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## Section 2: Creating a return to work plan

Even before you are ready to go back to work, developing a return to work plan can help you identify your goals and abilities. It can also help to reduce any feelings of stress and guilt you may be experiencing about returning to work. Developing a plan may help you to increase your confidence to move forward in your journey and to return to a 'normal' life. Whilst you probably won't be able to negotiate specific working conditions with a new employer, a return to work plan can help you to realise your own limitations.

- Ideally, your return to work plan should be developed in consultation with your employer. Your employer may have a trained return to work coordinator who can assist you with the process. Alternatively, you can seek the services of an approved workplace rehabilitation provider (see Section 5).
- If you are currently employed, the plan should be developed and agreed upon in consultation with your employer and your treating doctor.
- When completed, a copy of the plan should be provided to all parties.
- You may need to plan to return to work gradually and identify duties you can perform.
- The plan should be regularly reviewed and amended, depending upon your ability to adjust and cope when you have returned to work.

### When developing your return to work plan, consider any:

- special requirements you will need at work
- personal circumstances, which may impact on your capacity to perform certain duties at work
- industrial issues in the workplace (union rules/influences, workplace culture)
- impact on the workload of other employees
- training requirements to perform a new role prior to returning to work.

### Your return to work plan should be in writing and contain the:

- title of your job and location
- agreed purpose or goal of suitable duties
- name of your supervisor
- number of hours and days per week you are able to work
- agreed duties, including capacity and any restrictions
- arrangements to attend treatment or medical appointments
- proposed commencement date of work
- duration of your return to work plan, which may be dependent on the time it may take you to resume your usual role
- proposed return to work plan review dates
- signed agreement by yourself, employer, treating doctor and if applicable, union representative.

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## What are suitable duties?

Suitable duties listed on the plan will vary according to your circumstances.

This could mean you:

- have same job with different hours
- perform modified duties
- take on a different job entirely
- train for new opportunities
- do a combination of these options.

Initially, you should look for duties that are as close as possible to your usual work experience and within your current capacity. It's a good idea to discuss this with your doctor and request a written medical clearance to perform certain tasks.

## Suitable duties should be:

- consistent with your capacity and medical restrictions
- meaningful and productive
- agreed to by all relevant parties and recorded in your return to work plan
- time limited and include review dates, representing a graded return to your usual working hours and duties.

## Principles of Returning to Work

- Employers should be accommodating and encourage return to work.
- Priority should be given to an early, safe return to suitable duties following illness, in a manner that accounts for all relevant factors, including medical input.
- There should be a staged return to your usual work duties.
- Training for another job with your current employer, or with a different employer, should be considered as soon as it is known that your illness will prevent you from permanently returning to your usual duties.

(Adapted from: WorkCover NSW Guidelines for Workplace Return to Work Programs)

[http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/formspublications/publications/Documents/guidelines\\_for\\_workplace\\_rtw\\_programs\\_2872.pdf](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/formspublications/publications/Documents/guidelines_for_workplace_rtw_programs_2872.pdf)

## Return to work plan

Name:			
Job title:			
Location:			
Supervisor name:			
Date:			
Current purpose/goal:			
Commencement date:			
Length of program:			
Review dates:			
Role & Number of Duties	Days per week	Hours per week	Goal
<i>(Listed below are the various options which you need to decide you are currently able to perform)</i>			
<i>e.g. Administration Assistant no lifting over 3kgs no standing for longer than 10 minutes etc.....</i>	<i>3 days</i>	<i>4 hours</i>	<i>31/01/2014 upgrade to 4 days / 6 hours</i>
Suitable duties			
Suitable duties			
Suitable duties			
Usual duties			
Details of Treatment and Medical Appointments			
	Employee	Employer	Doctor
SIGNED AGREEMENT:			
DATE:			

## Example Return to Work Plan

Name:	Frank White		
Job title:	Forklift Driver		
Location:	Sydney		
Supervisor name:	Maurice Smith		
Date:	21 June 2013		
Current purpose/goal:	Gradual Return to work		
Commencement date:	1 July 2013		
Length of program:	6 months		
Review dates:	01/08/13	01/09/13	01/10/13
Role & Number of Duties	Days per week	Hours per week	Goal
<i>(Listed below are the various options which you need to decide you are currently able to perform)</i>			
<i>e.g. Administration Assistant no lifting over 3kgs no standing for longer than 10 minutes etc.....</i>	<i>3 days</i>	<i>4 hours</i>	<i>31/01/2103 upgrade to 4 days / 6 hours / day</i>
Suitable duties – Assist warehouse manager with administration duties	3 days	4 hours	1/8/13 increase return to usual duties 4 days/week for 5 hours/day
Suitable duties – Driving forklift	4 days	5 hours	1/9/13 continue with usual duties 5 days/week for 5 hours/day
Suitable duties – Driving forklift	5 days	5 hours	1/10/13 continue with usual full time duties
Usual duties – Driving forklift	5 days	6.5 hours	
Details of Treatment and Medical Appointments	Frank advised that he will need to see his specialist on 15/7 and 15/8 for his final consultation visits.		
	Employee	Employer	Doctor
SIGNED AGREEMENT:	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Signature</i>
DATE:	21/6/13	21/6/13	21/6/13

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## Section 3: Talking about your cancer history

### Your cancer history should not be the central issue when applying for a job

(If you have been a carer for someone with cancer the same information is applicable).

If you can do the job, you are not obliged to tell the employer everything about your cancer history and treatment. You should talk about your history when you are ready and feel comfortable. If you are asked a direct question regarding your health history, it is best to answer honestly. However, you should *focus on what you are able to do*, not on what you are unable to do.

### Reasons for disclosure

Mandatory reasons:

- If you pose a health and safety risk to yourself and/or others in the workplace.
- If you are unable to perform the essential requirements of the job.

Advantageous reasons:

- The employer's equal opportunity policies may assist you.
- To create an open and honest relationship with your employer.
- To facilitate negotiation of leave for any upcoming medical appointments or workplace modifications.
- If it is physically obvious that you have a limited ability, it is best to discuss the issues you have, to dispel any misconceptions, prejudices or stigmas. This provides you with an opportunity to explain how you are able to overcome any barriers to perform the job.
- You can disclose your history in a positive manner and show the skills and personal qualities you can bring to the role.

### Reasons against disclosure

- Possible discrimination and rejection.
- The employer may apply stereotypes to your health history and overlook your abilities.

An application form may ask a question about your health history, requesting a yes or no answer.

Suggestions of possible answers to this question:

- "I have no health problems that affect me performing the job."
- "I will elaborate at the interview."
- "My health problems are not applicable to this job."
- "I have medical clearance to perform this type of work."

You can also leave that section blank on the application. Do not respond "no" when the answer may be "yes".

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### **Disclosure at the interview**

If you discuss the cancer during the interview, it may enable you to present your case in a positive manner and explain your health history. This gives you the opportunity to explain that you are capable of performing the job you.

### **Disclosure after you have commenced work**

You have the right to accept a job offer without disclosing your cancer history, providing that:

- you are able to perform the advertised job, and
- your history does not impede your duties, impact you or your work colleagues' ability to perform their work, or adversely affect the business.

You should consider that delaying disclosure could result in your employer viewing you as untrustworthy, and it may jeopardise your working relationship. However, your employer may be more understanding if you provide an adequate explanation of why you delayed disclosure prior to accepting the job.



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## Work colleagues, friends and relatives

- Tell people that you are ready to get back to work and are looking for a job.
- Ask for any kind of help or advice they may be able to offer.

## Newspapers

- Read local, state and interstate newspapers, as you may learn about new job opportunities in your area that you can directly access (online or at your local library).
- Check the employment section for job vacancies.
- Don't make newspapers your only source for job seeking as this will limit your choices.



## Employment and recruitment agencies

- Agencies source job vacancies directly from employers and many employers exclusively use agencies for their job recruitment.
- Find an employment agency by searching on the internet or in the yellow pages. Be aware that different agencies target different types of work.
- Register with an agency online or attend an interview. It's usually preferable to arrange a face-to-face appointment.
- Discuss the type of job you are seeking. The agency may help you access jobs that you may not otherwise see advertised.
- The agency may request that you complete an assessment of your skills.

## Centrelink (Department of Human Services)

- You may be eligible to access vocational counselling and professional assistance to either protect your current job or find a new job. This is means tested.
- Register at Centrelink and obtain a Job Seeker ID number. This number enables you to access services and jobs advertised on the Centrelink network, either in their offices or online at home/library.
- You can request access to job seeking assistance services such as Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) or Australian JobSearch (refer to Section 5).  
You will probably have to take an assessment to access services.

## Notice boards

Keep your eyes and ears open. Look for job advertisements on community notice boards at your library, shopping centre, on business premises or building sites.





## Job seeking tips

1. *Consider job seeking as your current job.*
2. *Plan and organise.* Use a diary and keep a job seeking log (see Section 5).
3. *Get proactive* – network with people who may be able to help you.
4. *Know yourself.* Make a list of your skills, starting with your strongest. Knowing your skills will give you *confidence*.
5. *Research* the companies you want to work for.
6. *Be determined*, but don't be forceful and irritating.
7. Find *unique ways to describe your skills* and jobs you could do.
8. Know *why you are a better choice* for a job than someone else.
9. *Don't limit your resources.* Enlist the help of family, friends, work colleagues and professionals for support, suggestions and assistance. However, don't rely on one source alone.
10. Pay attention to *personal grooming* when job seeking. First impressions are lasting ones.
11. Remember to *thank people* that assist you in your job seeking efforts.
12. *Demonstrate* the appropriate skills and attitude for the role.

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## Common job seeking errors

### Inadequate resume

- Employers usually scan resumes quickly and often only view electronic versions. If your resume does not stand out, you may not get an interview.
- Include some key words from the advertised job criteria, as electronic scanning may detect these and move your application to the top of the pile.
- Ensure that your resume is in a format that is easy to read and understand.
- Briefly outline your education and work experience.
- Emphasise your accomplishments rather than your duties.



### Failure to network

- If you don't put yourself out there, no-one will know that you want to return to work.
- Remember, approximately 80% of jobs never get advertised.
- Try volunteering, which will get you out of the house and help you to recognise your work skills.

### Limiting job sources

- Don't rely on just the newspaper or one friend. To increase the odds, make sure you access all of the options available to you.
- Try not to blame other factors on your inability to job seek.

### Universal approach

- Don't take shortcuts – tailor every application to the role.
- Employers/recruiters will probably know if you send a generic cover letter.
- Try to sound interesting, warm and friendly on the phone, and ask specific questions about the role.

### Restricting job search

- Use as much of your personal time (based on your wellbeing and stamina) to search for jobs.
- Consider expanding your search – many people limit their options based on geographical location, commute time, parking, size and type of employer. A less restricted approach allows you to test your abilities.
- If you receive a positive response (job offer), you can decline it if the barriers are too great. The experience may help build your confidence.

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## Module 2: Resume

1. Your resume is the first contact with your prospective employer.
2. Employers and agencies review hundreds of resumes. If it does not meet the advertised job criteria and/or stand out, it may be excluded.
3. Arrange your resume into concise sections – this provides structure and makes it easy to read.
4. Although you can use the same resume for different job applications, it is advisable to make small amendments, highlighting your skills and experience to address the advertised job criteria.
5. Update your resume regularly, adding any new skills or work experience.

### Your resume should include:

1. **Personal details**  
Name, address, phone number, email address
2. **Career or employment goals**  
Overview of your objectives, goals and aspirations
3. **Summary of work experience**  
Main areas of expertise and details about specific skills
4. **Employment history**  
You may create a chronological record, starting with your most recent job. List the employer, location, period employed and main responsibilities. Alternately, you may create a more 'dynamic' resume, focusing on skills rather than chronology (look on the internet for examples).
5. **Education and training history**  
Create a chronological record of your education: start with your most recent achievements. List the year completed, educational institution and location, and formal qualification achieved.
6. **Achievements**  
Summarise any professional career achievements or major work projects (if applicable to the role).

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## 7. Optional information

List community service or volunteer work you have performed, memberships to professional associations and/or affiliations, if you can speak other languages, personal interests (e.g. self-development activities).

## 8. References

A prospective employer may wish to speak with people you have worked with to ask them questions and discuss if you are suitable for the role. On your resume, you can write 'Available on request'. If the prospective employer requests referees, this indicates that the employer is considering your application. It also enables you to refer to specific referees.

tip

When you are describing your achievements, use verbs such as:  
**developed      achieved      directed      supervised**

## Things to exclude from your resume

It is best to leave out information that is unnecessary, as it may make the document crowded and contribute to negative bias and discrimination.

Date of birth/age	Health details
Reasons for leaving previous employment	Photographs
Citizenship	Place of birth
Partner's occupation	Children's details
Remuneration of past jobs	Hobbies
Salary expectations	Marital status
Religion	Primary school information
Weight	Date written
Height	

Look on the internet for examples of contemporary resumes. Many employment or recruitment agencies provide examples on their websites. (If applying for modelling or acting jobs you may need to provide personal details, such as your photo, height, etc.)

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## Module 3: Writing a cover letter



### Supporting your resume

Your cover letter is fundamental to your application, so you should write a unique cover letter for every job application. The letter provides you the opportunity to highlight relevant information which may not be included in your resume. A good cover letter may get you an interview or job offer.

### Guidelines for writing a cover letter

- Focus on the criteria specified in the job advertisement. Provide brief examples of how you meet the criteria (2-3 lines).
- Copy and paste job criteria from the advertisement into your letter, to save time and prevent errors.
- If no criteria are provided, contact the employer and request the job criteria and/or description. You can try contacting the employer or recruitment agency or access [www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au](http://www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au) to search for job descriptions.
- Seek assistance if you're not confident writing a cover letter (see Section 5).
- Check the letter thoroughly for errors and have someone else check it too.
- Call the company or recruitment agency and get a contact name and/or job title to use in your letter. Acknowledge the source in your letter, eg. "Further to my telephone conversation with your receptionist, Anne Long..." Often letters which are not addressed to a specific person are dismissed as junk and end up in the bin.

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## Sample cover letter

[Your name & address]

[Your phone number]

[Your email address]

Date

Name (of company contact, if known)

Their job title (if known)

[Company name & address]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

[Begin each paragraph without an indent]

First Paragraph – Briefly introduce yourself, describe the position you are applying for and how you found the job vacancy.

Second Paragraph – Address the job criteria/description. Briefly describe, using examples of how your skills and/or experience meet the job requirements.

Third Paragraph – Briefly describe your personal attributes and qualities. Provide examples when possible (e.g. you are motivated, enthusiastic, team player).

Fourth Paragraph – State that you look forward to the possibility of meeting at interview and confirm that your resume is enclosed/attached.

Yours faithfully,

[Your signature]

[Your name]

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## Completing an application form

- If you are able to, take an application home to complete or fill in the form online.
- Type or print neatly in black ink.
- Use verbs when describing your skills, abilities and experience (e.g. developed, achieved, directed, supervised).
- Always use your full, legal name (do not use your nickname).
- If your 'desired salary' is requested, state a range or write 'negotiable'.
- Fill in all questions on the form. If there are any questions which do not apply to you, write N/A (not applicable).
- If 'position desired' is asked, do not answer 'anything', clearly state the kind of role you are seeking.
- If possible, attach your resume to the application form.
- Answer questions in a way that will make you sound 'interesting' and stand out from other applicants.
- If you would like to work full-time for a particular company, consider requesting part time, casual or contract work, which may get your foot in the door and lead to other opportunities.
- If you need to provide referees' names and contact details make sure that the referees:
  - are relevant to the position you are applying for
  - know you well and will make favourable comments
  - have given permission to be listed as a referee.
- Unless requested, do not attach any additional documents, apart from your cover letter and resume.
- Check for errors, including spelling, and sign and date the application.

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## Module 4: Telephone skills



tip

What you say and how you say it is extremely important

Using your telephone and verbal skills to find a job can make you stand out. However, poor telephone skills may sabotage your efforts.

It can be daunting phoning prospective employers, and you may feel nervous or fearful of rejection. Usually the fear of making the call is worse than the call itself. The more calls you make, the better you will get.

If you believe that you don't have the confidence to phone prospective employers, seek the assistance of a friend or professional (see Section 5).

### You should phone employers when you:

- need more information or clarification about the role
- only have a phone number for the job vacancy
- get a lead that a company has a vacancy
- are cold-calling to enquire about jobs that are not advertised
- want to establish a relationship with a potential employer.

### Preparing to call a prospective employer

- Write down your questions before you call – make sure they are clear and brief.
- Plan to call from a quiet room, at a time when you know you will not be disturbed or distracted. Pick a convenient time – don't call too early or too late in the day, or at lunch time.
- Rehearse asking the questions to yourself or someone else. Check that your voice sounds warm, friendly and chatty. Don't yell or whisper.
- Before you pick up the phone, take some deep breaths to relax.

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## During the call

- Introduce yourself, state your first and last name and explain why you are calling.
- For example: “Good morning, my name is Anne Long, I hope that you can help me. I am calling in relation to the job your company has advertised” (or) “regarding any job vacancies you may have”. Often people are happy to help you, when you ask politely.
- Listen carefully to the person’s responses. Write notes as you talk of any important information, names, titles etc.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Be prepared to answer questions about yourself, but be brief, remember people at work are usually busy.
- Ask for the names of other people in the organisation who you can contact. Refer to them using titles (e.g. Mr, Mrs).
- Thank the person you speak to for their time and assistance.
- Be politely assertive – ask to speak to the relevant person. However, if this isn’t effective, stay calm and ask if you should call back at a later time or on another day.

## If you reach an answering machine

- Listen carefully to the greeting
- Speak slowly and clearly if you leave a message – spell any difficult names and make sure you leave your phone number
- Remember to say thank you
- If you do not receive a return call, follow up with the person you called.

tip

Make the first impression a good one. You may want to use a script

### Introduce yourself

“Good morning, my name is Anne Long”

### Ask for assistance

“I wonder if you can help me”

### Request to speak to person in company

“I would like to speak to Mr John Jones please”

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### Explain why you are calling

Receptionist: "I will see if he is available, may I ask what it is regarding?"

"I am phoning regarding the administration position advertised in my local paper"

Receptionist: "I will see if he is available"

"Good morning, this is Mr Jones"

"Good morning Mr Jones, my name is Anne Long. I am calling regarding the administration position. I was wondering if the position is still available?"

Mr Jones "Yes it is, we are accepting applications until Friday."

### Here is your chance to ask any relevant questions

"That's great. Do you have a job description available for the position?"

Mr Jones "Yes we do, I can have a copy emailed to you....."

"Would you like me to fax or email my application?"

### When finishing the call be polite and appreciative

"Thank you Mr Jones. I appreciate the time you have taken to speak to me and I look forward to meeting you soon."

### Telephone script

"Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_"

"I was wondering if you can help me."

"I would like to speak to \_\_\_\_\_"

"I am calling regarding the job I saw advertised in/on the \_\_\_\_\_, for a \_\_\_\_\_"

"Do you have a moment to discuss the job?"

"I have a background in (industry etc) \_\_\_\_\_"

"I have skills and experience in \_\_\_\_\_"

"I was wondering (ask any additional questions) \_\_\_\_\_"

"Thank you for your time, I will forward you my application and look forward to meeting you."

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Module 5: Interview skills and follow-up



tip

Employers seek people that are experienced, motivated and a good fit with their company.

Getting a job interview is your opportunity to sell your skills and abilities. Every interview you attend will improve your interview skills. Being prepared and believing in yourself will boost your confidence.

### Before the interview

#### Prepare

- Research the job, company and industry. This demonstrates your initiative and interest and encourages conversation during the interview.
- Identify the skills and knowledge you need to do the job.
- Request a copy of the full job description from the recruiter or employer.
- Role play or rehearse interview answers with a family member or friend.
- Research common phrases and words the company representative may use.
- Make reminder notes that you can take into the interview (research, questions, job criteria etc).

#### The night before

- Check you have copies of your resume.
- Confirm the company address, know how to get there and how long it will take.
- Prepare your clothes.
- If presenting, ensure your equipment (e.g. laptop) is charged and take hardcopies for backup.
- Aim to arrive to the interview early, in case you encounter any problems with transport, traffic or parking.
- Prepare yourself: read over your notes and check your appearance.
- Use a folder or portfolio to keep all your documents tidy and easy to access.
- Take a note pad and pen.

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## First impressions count

Your interviewer will see you before they speak with you. Look like you can do the job and have made an effort to look well presented.

## What to wear to an interview

Your clothing should be appropriate for the position and the company. You should dress to a standard that may be above what is expected, as this conveys your enthusiasm and self-image to a prospective employer.

- Wear professional, conservative, ironed clothing.
- Avoid high fashion, short or revealing clothing.
- Don't apply overpowering deodorant and/or perfume.
- Brush your teeth.
- Get a haircut and/or wash and brush your hair. Shave.
- Cut and clean your fingernails.
- Keep make-up and jewellery (including piercings) to a minimum.
- Avoid exposing tattoos.
- Don't carry large bags and backpacks.
- Don't wear heavily branded or novelty items of clothing.

## Pre-interview nerves and anxiety

- Use deep breathing techniques.
- Get rid of nervous energy by doing 30 minutes of exercise up to 2 hours prior to the interview.
- Listen to relaxing music.
- Do not smoke or consume caffeine within 2 hours of the interview.
- Share how you're feeling with a friend.
- If you are feeling tense during the interview, try to relax your shoulders.
- Remember the interview process is not only about being interviewed – it also provides you with an opportunity to decide if the job is right for you.

## Pre-interview checklist

- Portfolio (examples of previous work if applicable)
- A copy of the job advertisement
- A spare copy of your resume
- Diary, pen and notepaper
- Copies of academic qualifications
- Copies of reference letters and referees details
- Mobile phone to silent or turned off or take a phone card
- Appropriate clothing and well groomed
- Company, address (including street number and level)
- The name of the person interviewing you and their phone number
- Directions to the location

tip

Initial impressions are formed during the first two minutes.  
Arrive on time, be appropriately dressed and well groomed.  
Always remember to put your mobile phone on silent mode.

**Interview preparation** (Complete this prior to your interview)

Position applied for:

\_\_\_\_\_

Products/Services/Duties of the company

\_\_\_\_\_

The company history

\_\_\_\_\_

The company's main competition

\_\_\_\_\_

Job position & description (notes)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Preparing for the interview**

Date & time of interview

\_\_\_\_\_

Address of interview

Interviewer's name and position

Company profile/review

\_\_\_\_\_

Questions to ask

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## During the interview

### During the interview listen intently, answer and ask questions

Use the interview as an opportunity to find out more about:

- the job you are applying for
- the company
- the industry
- any future job opportunities.

### DO NOT

- Talk negatively about your previous employer or work colleagues.
- Lie about your employment history.
- Interrupt your interviewer. (Let them lead the interview.)
- Talk too much and provide irrelevant information.
- Get too friendly and share too many details about your private life.
- Fiddle or swing in your chair.

### DO

- Pause before you respond to each question, even if you know exactly what you want to say. You will sound more composed. Ask for a glass of water if you feel you need some time to pause.
- Take notes of any important facts.
- Keep your answers simple and concise.
- Ask for clarification if you are confused by a question. Your interviewer expects questions, and it is better to be sure that you are providing an appropriate answer.
- Sell your skills and abilities and provide examples of what you have done.
- Be positive. Don't complain or apologise for skills you don't have.

### Interview questions

You will be asked specific work-related questions, requiring you to provide factual responses about situations you may have faced in the past. Behavioural- or competency-based interviewing is common in many areas of recruitment. Stick to the facts and focus on your positive abilities and skills you gained from your experiences.

When answering questions, using the S.T.A.R. approach may help you:

Situation Task – provide a brief background regarding the event and specific challenge

Action you took – explain how you overcame the challenge

Results – explain, in a positive manner the experience you gained from the situation

## Questions you may be asked and optional responses

<p>How would you describe yourself?</p> <p>How would others describe you?</p>	<p>Discuss your best attributes and achievements from your career that relate to the job you are applying for (but don't tell your life story).</p>
<p>What jobs have you held?</p> <p>How did you get them, and why did you leave?</p> <p>What skills have you gained from some of the jobs you have held?</p> <p>What jobs have you enjoyed the most/least?</p> <p>What did you do on a day-to-day basis?</p> <p>What responsibilities did you have?</p>	<p>Prepare positive responses. Focus on a new direction, using your skills in a different way, looking for a better culture fit. Talk about the value you can add to the company with your skills. Try to talk about your previous employer positively.</p>
<p>What kind of work environment are you most comfortable working in?</p> <p>How do you work under pressure?</p> <p>Give me an example of a work situation in which you were not proud of your performance. What did you learn from this mistake?</p> <p>Tell me about a conflict with a co-worker, and how you resolved it?</p>	<p>You could say that you are prepared to do whatever it takes to get the job done well and on time and try to do disagreeable things first to get them out of the way rather than putting them off.</p>
<p>What do you know about this company?</p> <p>In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?</p>	<p>Show that you have a basic understanding of the company, their market and any other relevant points that may relate to your job.</p>
<p>What motivates you to work hard?</p> <p>What are your strengths?</p> <p>What are your weaknesses?</p>	<p>Explain your motivations and how you could possibly add value to the company.</p> <p>Talk about a time when you may have failed (choose a failure that will not turn the interviewer off), but exhibit how you were able to overcome the problem, learn from it and apply to future situations.</p>
<p>Where do you want to be in five years?</p>	<p>Focus on your positive attributes and</p>

<p>What do your past supervisors think of you?</p> <p>Why should I hire you?</p>	<p>communicate your strengths to the employer. Emphasise how you will fulfil their needs in the role.</p>
<p>If you have changed jobs a lot you may be asked how long you would stay in the new job.</p>	<p>You could state that you are looking for a long-term opportunity at an organisation where you can learn and develop. You could ask if this applies to the potential role.</p>
<p>What computer skills do you have?</p>	<p>Explain which computer programs you are familiar with and any courses you have attended. If your computer skills require updating, you may propose to attend courses in your own time.</p>
<p>Are you willing to travel?</p>	<p>If you are, say so. If unsure, ask how much travel is involved.</p>
<p>What did you earn in your last job?</p>	<p>Ask if you can discuss this later after the responsibilities for the job have been determined. An employer may base your new wage on your previous wage. You may also want to enquire what the salary range is for the job.</p>
<p>What are your salary expectations?</p>	<p>If you have found out what the salary range is and know what the job responsibilities are, you may state that you feel that you would fall into the top end of the category.</p> <p>If you are unsure of the job requirements, you might state that it is hard to discuss salary without knowing more about the job and the responsibilities. You can also research award and industry rates prior to the interview.</p>

## Returning to work questions to be aware of and optional responses

How long have you been looking for a job?	Be honest, but remember you are not obliged to disclose your health history. There are many reasons why you have not yet found work, e.g. limited vacancies in your area of work.
Why have you been out of a job for so long?	If you do not wish to disclose your medical history, you can explain that you had to leave your previous job for health reasons, but are well now and ready and able to return to work. Or you can just state that you took a break for personal/family reasons.
Why did you leave your last job?	Provide positive reasons, e.g. your skill base was not being fully utilised, you are seeking new career direction, etc.
Have you ever been dismissed from a job?	Be careful. If you have been dismissed, focus on your positive skills, don't ignore the question.

## Questions you could ask at the Interview

Questions:	Answers:
<p>Could you tell me more about the company?</p> <p>What has been the pattern of growth for the company over the past five years?</p> <p>What is the future growth plan of the company?</p>	
<p>Why is this job open?</p> <p>How many people held this position over the recent years?</p>	
Who are the company's major competitors?	
Would I be working by myself or with other people?	
What are the dress requirements?	
Is a uniform provided?	

How soon could I start if I am successful?	
How does this position fit into the overall organisation?	
What would be my responsibilities?	
Where is the job located by way of company structure?	
Who would I report to?	
Where does he/she sit in the company structure?	
Who would report to me? How experienced are they?	
What would you expect me to achieve in the first six months?	
Who are your customers? Are they mostly local, regional or global?	
In which direction is the company going? Upwards? Expansion plans?	
What are the chances of advancement/promotion in this position?  Where are the greatest opportunities for growth within the company?  When?	
What will my remuneration be, including benefits and potential bonuses? (Don't ask this question unless the topic is raised by the interviewer, or you have been offered the job.)	
Will travelling be required in this position?	
Is it likely that relocation would be required now or in the future?	
What type of training is required for this position? How long is the training period?	

What other training opportunities are provided?	
What will my priorities be? What will be my first assignment?	
What issues/challenges am I likely to face when I first take on the role?	

### Prohibited questions

Anti-discrimination law prohibits employers from discriminating against people applying for and in employment.

- You do not have to answer certain questions.
- You can ask the interviewer why they need the information and how it impacts on your application.
- However, if you feel comfortable and believe your answer may give a positive impression, you can respond.

It is unlawful for employers to discriminate against applicants on certain grounds. You should not have to answer questions about:

- sex (gender, sexual orientation)
- pregnancy
- race (colour, ethnic or national origin)
- marital status
- disability (past, present or future physical, psychological, providing it does not impact on your ability to perform the role you are applying for)
- age
- religion.

### Examples of questions you may be asked that you do not have to answer

What is your maiden name?

Do you attend church?

What kind of car do you drive?

Do you own or rent your home?

What does your partner/spouse do for a living?

Is your partner/spouse subject to work transfer to a different location?

What is your religion?

What religious holidays are you unable to work?

Are you planning to and/or do you have children?

Where did you learn to speak English?

Tell me about the health problems you have had in the past?

Where were you born?

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## How to respond when you are asked an inappropriate question:

- “How does your question relate to the position?”
- “I am uncomfortable with this question, can you please explain why you need this information?”
- “I do not believe that my religious beliefs/age/marital status is an issue for my performance in this job.”

## Body language - 60-80% of communication is non-verbal.

- Smile when you enter the interview room.
- Shake hands (prompt and firm) and make eye contact with all interviewers. Maintain eye contact during the interview.
- Sit facing the interviewer. You may want to put your hands in your lap and keep your arms uncrossed.
- Nod your head when in agreement.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Pause before you answer a question (avoid ums and arghs).
- Use appropriate, but not excessive, humour. You don't want to appear superficial.

## Negative factors which influence employers not to select you:

- poor personal grooming
- over confident ‘know-it-all’ attitude
- poor speech and grammar
- lack of goals and purpose
- lack of confidence
- focus on money
- negative talk about past employers
- failure to make eye contact
- failure to ask questions about the job and the company
- apparent lack of preparation for the interview
- dishonesty
- lack of communication skills
- lack of research into the company and the job.

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## After the Interview

### Checklist

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Company\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer's name\_\_\_\_\_

- Did you arrive on time? YES / NO
- Were you dressed appropriately? YES / NO
- Were you friendly with staff? YES / NO
- Did you introduce yourself to your interviewer? YES / NO
- Did you shake hands with the interviewer? YES / NO
- Did you describe your activities and interests? YES / NO
- Does the interviewer have a copy of your resume to keep? YES / NO
- Did the interviewer take references and/or referee details? YES / NO
- Did you maintain eye contact? YES / NO
- Did you keep good posture? YES / NO
- Did you mention your major strengths? YES / NO
- Did you arrange to call back in a few days? YES / NO
- Did you shake hands and thank them at the end of the interview? YES / NO

### Thank you email or letter

Sending thank you correspondence, if appropriate, after your interview is the last chance you may have to make a good impression.

The correspondence will be judged on the content and presentation. If you received an interview using the services of a recruiter, you should also write to the recruiter or copy them into any emails or letters to the potential employer. Do not phone the employer, as this may be viewed as intrusive and bothersome.

### Things to remember:

- thank the interviewer for their time
- remind them why you would be a good candidate for the position and how you could positively contribute to the company
- state that you are keen and willing to work
- respond as quickly as possible, so they remember you
- make the letter brief and concise.

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## Example emails or letters

When you are told: **“We will let you know”**

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be interviewed for the position of \_\_\_\_\_ . I know that only a few applicants were invited for personal interviews, and I am grateful to have been invited. Your company is a dynamic and inspirational organisation, and I would be very excited to be offered the job. I know that my skills and experience would enable me to contribute in a positive manner to your business. I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely.....

When you are told: **“We would like you to come back for a second interview”**

Thank you for meeting with me last week. I enjoyed talking with you and learning more about your company. I appreciate your efforts to arrange a second interview with \_\_\_\_\_ . The information you provided to me about the department’s goals and requirements was helpful for me. I now feel that I have the knowledge to discuss how I will be able to contribute to the team.

Yours in appreciation.....

When you are told: **“Sorry your application was unsuccessful”**

You can write a brief thank-you note and enclose a copy of your resume to request that the employer keep you in mind for any future job prospects.

## Interview feedback

Finding out why you were not offered the job vacancy and how you performed in the interview may help you to be successful in subsequent interviews.

- Send an email prior to a telephone call to let the interviewer know that you will be phoning for a brief discussion and requesting some constructive feedback.
- Call the person who arranged the interview (recruiter or employer). This may assist you in identifying any weaknesses you may have.

### DO

- Ask the interviewer to be frank and constructive in their comments.
- Ask how you can improve.
- Keep the conversation open and finish with a sincere “thank you”.

### DO NOT

- Argue your case if you disagree – you’re seeking their point of view.
- Send an email. The phone is quicker, and the employer may not want to put criticism in writing or have the time to write an email.

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## Section 5: Resources

The Australian Government Department of Employment – national policies and programmes that help Australians find and keep employment and work in safe, fair and productive workplaces.

<http://employment.gov.au/>

Department of Human Services (DHS) – social and health related payments and services.

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/>

Department of Human Services (DHS) – assistance looking for work, if you have recently lost your job, or at risk of losing your job.

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/looking-for-work>

Centrelink – payments and services for people at times of major change.

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink>

Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) – employment and assessment services for people with a disability, injury or health condition.

<http://www.crsaustralia.gov.au/>

Job in Jeopardy - assistance for people at risk of losing their job because of illness, injury or disability.

[http://www.crsaustralia.gov.au/job\\_in\\_jeopardy.htm](http://www.crsaustralia.gov.au/job_in_jeopardy.htm)

Experience + - assisting mature age workers find a job, and addressing negative attitudes and practices towards mature age people.

<http://employment.gov.au/experienceplus>

Job Services Australia (JSA) – assistance to find and keep your job.

<http://employment.gov.au/job-services-australia-jsa>

Indigenous Employment and Business - specific assistance for Indigenous job seekers, Indigenous businesses and employers.

<http://employment.gov.au/indigenous>

Job Access – information to help you access services and supports to help you get a job and manage at work.

<http://jobaccess.gov.au/Home/Home.aspx>

Job Guide – an extensive list of occupations, detailing their education and training pathways.

<http://www.jobguide.deewr.gov.au/>

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Comcare - works in partnership with employees and employers to reduce the human and financial costs of workplace injuries and disease in the Commonwealth jurisdiction.

<http://www.comcare.gov.au/>

Fair Work Australia - national workplace relations tribunal. It is an independent body with power to carry out a range of functions relating to:

- the safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions
- enterprise bargaining
- industrial action
- dispute resolution
- termination of employment
- other workplace matters.

<http://www.fwa.gov.au/>

Fair Work Ombudsman - information and advice about Australia's workplace rights & rules.

<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/pages/default.aspx>

About.com – resources and links addressing all aspects of job searching.

<http://www.about.com/careers/>

About.com - Where to look for jobs, how to conduct a job search, write your resume, cover letters, and the best way to use social networking to job search.

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/findajob/tp/startajobsearch.htm>

CareerOne – Advice for job hunting, resume and cover letter writing, interview skills, salary.

[http://career-advice.careerone.com.au/?re=nv\\_gh\\_gnt1158\\_%2F](http://career-advice.careerone.com.au/?re=nv_gh_gnt1158_%2F)

MyCareer - Advice for job hunting, resume & cover letter writing, interview skills, salary.

<http://content.mycareer.com.au/advice-research.aspx>

Seek - Advice for job hunting, resume & cover letter writing, interview skills, salary.

<http://www.seek.com.au/jobs-resources/>

TAFE NSW – NSW Technical and Further Education Commission (TAFE NSW) vocational education and training.

<https://www.tafensw.edu.au/>

Australia.gov - information and services from about 900 Australian Government websites and state and territory resources. Education and training page.

<http://australia.gov.au/topics/education-and-training>

# Job Seeking Log

Be organised and keep track of the jobs you have applied for

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Date from: \_\_\_\_\_

Date to: \_\_\_\_\_

Company	Contact person	Date	Phone	Job/Position	Type of contact	Comments	Follow up 1	Date	Follow up 2

Use this form to keep track of the details of jobs you are applying for

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