

Frequently Asked Questions About Searching for a Summer Job

Q: When is a good time to start my summer job search?

A: Many students wait until it's too late to get it together and look for a job. Give yourself about 2 months of *active* job searching time so that you can really *think* about what you're doing.

Q: What if I don't know what my interests are right now. What if I'm not good at anything?

A: First of all, you're not the only person who thinks they are not good at anything and that they don't have career interests. All of us at some point have felt that way. The thing to remember is...we are all good at something. For example, just because you may not be strong in computers doesn't mean you can't work for a website. Websites need accountants, administrative assistants, photographers, artists, journalist, business analysts, etc. Think about what kinds of things make you the happiest and don't seem like a chore when you are doing them...helping your little brother with homework, fixing your parents' computer, keeping track of your expenses and saving money, talking with people who you've never met before, writing computer programs, painting, etc. These are all things that can be turned into summer jobs, or at least a start down a path to a summer job.

Q: So, I've got an interview. I'm nervous. What should I do to prepare?

A: First thing...try to relax. An interview is just an exchange of information...you tell the employer about yourself and your interests, and the employer tells you about the company and its interests. Before you go in to the interview, consider these tips --

Your hair, clothes, hygiene, handshake all make up the employer's first impression of you. Choose clothing that is dressier than normal. I'm not talking about a 3 piece suit or a full length dress. But I am talking about clothing that you might wear to a religious service or an important meeting at school. For you young men out there, consider wearing a shirt and tie, neat, clean pants, and clean shoes - not sneakers! Put a little effort into it! For the young ladies - a pants suit or dress/skirt is appropriate.

Q: I don't have nice clothes like you are suggesting. What can I wear?

A: Do the best you can with what you have. You might even be able to borrow some from an older sibling, cousin, or a parent. The most important thing to remember is - be neat (no rips or wrinkles) and clean.

Q: When I go to the interview, should I bring anything?

A: Yes! Bring a pen, the company's name/address/contact name, your Personal Data Sheet (PDS), breath mints, and change for a phone call (or cell phone). You need a pen in case the receptionist doesn't have one. You need the company's information so you can *find* the place and know who to ask for when you get there (this means you have to ask the employer when you make the interview appointment!!). You need your PDS so you don't have to remember names and numbers when filling out an application. You need breath mints...well, you can figure that one out! You need change for a phone call or cell phone in case you get lost finding the place, you are going to be late to the interview for some reason (so, call and tell them), you got out early and need a ride home, or who knows what else. Better safe than sorry.

Q: What kinds of questions are they going to ask me in the interview?

A: Most of the time, employers want to know what kind of an employee you will be. Will you be late most of the time, or will you pay attention to your start and finish times? Will you be pleasant to work with or do you tend to be grouchy and unpleasant to customers? Are you able to listen to suggestions and requests without rolling your eyes or having an "attitude," etc. Here are some sample questions...What is your favorite subject in school? Are doing any extra curricular activities? Why do you want to work for us? What kind of an employee will you be? What hours can you work? Do you have transportation to get here? Do you mind working a little late if there is still work to be done?

Q: How do I answer a question that I don't know the answer to or don't understand?

A: Take your time and listen to the question. You can even ask the employer to repeat the question by saying, "I'm sorry. Can you please repeat the question, I didn't quite hear it." Or you can ask, "Would you mind explaining your question? I'm not sure what you mean." Try to answer the question as best you can while leaving out slang words, curse words, and um's and uh's.

Q: Should I ask questions in the interview or let the employer do all the talking?

A: You should definitely ask questions. This is a great way to let employers know that you are interested in their company. You can ask, "What kind of person are you looking for to fill this position?" Try this one, "If I start out in this position, is there any room for me to move up to a position with more responsibility?" Remember, you are interviewing them just like they are interviewing you! Here are some more smart questions, "What are the hours? What time should I be in each day? Can you describe a

typical day?" By asking these questions you can begin to see if you would like this kind of job or if it wasn't what you thought it would be after all.

Q: When the interview is over, what do I do?

A: Let the employer's actions tell you what to do next. Here are some examples: If the employer stands up at the end...you stand up too. If the employer extends his/her hand, shake it. Always say thank you, please, you're welcome, it was my pleasure....good manners will make a strong impression.

Q: What can I do to find out if I got the job?

A: Make sure you get a business card or write down the employers name before you leave the office. Ask the employer when you should contact him/her about the position. Tell the employer that you would be great at the job and look forward to hearing from him/her soon! If the employer doesn't give you a date to call back, wait about 3 days before calling to check on the position. But, send a thank you letter or email right away - that afternoon if you can!! Check out the sample thank you letter later on in this handout!

Q: I got the job! How do I handle my first day?

A: This is a very exciting day! Stay excited, but be cool. Make sure you remember how to get there, what time you have to be there (and be 5 minutes early!), what clothes you should wear, your supervisor's name, etc. It's a lot to remember, but you can do it. You know you can do it, and so does the employer...they hired you!

Make sure you do a lot of listening your first few days. Ask questions if you don't understand and let the employer know when you want them to go back over something that is complex. Remember to smile and be thankful that they hired you!

Q: What happens if I make a mistake when I'm on the job?

A: First thing - is anyone in any danger? If yes, get help immediately. If no, apologize to anyone that may be effected by the mistake or misunderstanding. Try to make it better quickly and politely, then let your supervisor know if the situation hasn't been fixed. It's better for your supervisor to hear about it from you, than from an angry customer or coworker. Everyone makes mistakes. The important thing is that you learn from it and try not to make that mistake again. That sounds corny, but it is true. And if you really live your life that way, you will be amazed at how confident you will become and how many people will respect you for it.

Remember, the skills you learn at school and at work can all be used to make you smarter, more confident, more interesting, and more valuable as an employee and a person. Good luck - you'll be terrific!