Career and Workforce Readiness

CAREER AND WORKFORCE READINESS

CAREERSPACE - TRENT UNIVERSITY

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Careerspace - Trent University

CONTENTS

Resume and Cover Letter Writing

Networking and LinkedIn

Workplace Communication and Professionalism

Welcome to Career and Workforce readiness: a six-module course created by Trent University's Careerspace to support learners in entering the workforce, taking the next step in their career, or figure out where to start with the whole process. During this course, you will have opportunities to capture resources and information you may wish to collect in a career development portfolio. We'll signal you when those opportunities arise along the way. By collecting your resume, cover letter, and other career-oriented information in a portfolio, you will have a readily available resource to share evidence about your career qualifications. This course has been designed to allow you to complete the entire six-module series, or to pick and choose the modules and activities that best match your needs.

Navigating This Resource

Navigating Pressbooks is easy! The table of contents can be found in the top left-hand corner, with each module being divided into chapters, and each chapter sub-divided into parts. At the bottom of the page, you'll see three buttons that you can also use to navigate: one to go backward, one to go forward, and one that bumps you to the top of the page. You can click this link to view the corresponding gif in it's own browser tab.
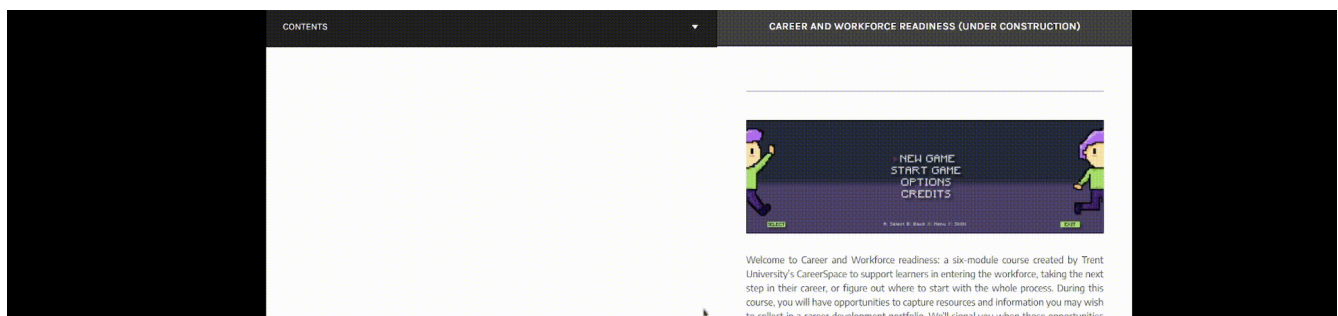
When completing activities for your portfolio, you'll be given the option to export your work as a document

so that you can organize it on your device. You can navigate these activities by clicking the arrows in the bottom right hand corner, or the little pips along the left-hand side. You can click this link to view the corresponding gif in it's own browser tab.
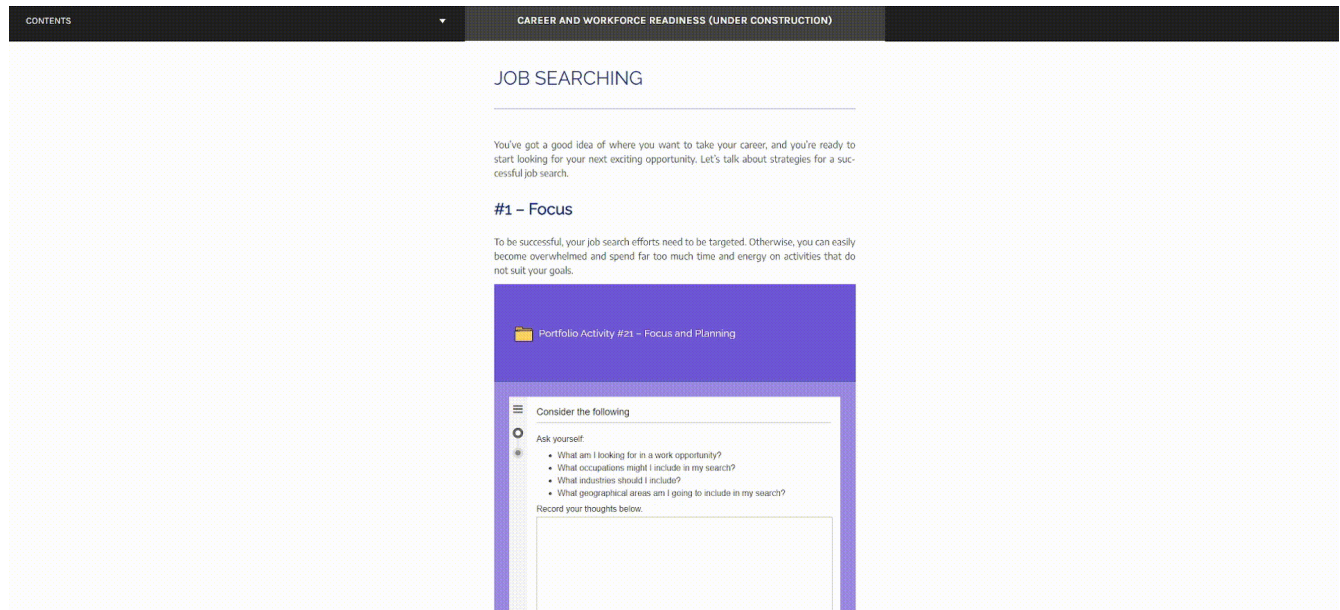
You can download the portfolio folder by clicking the link here in the introduction. This link will also be presented to you at the start of every module. Each portfolio activity will have an empty folder of the same name, making it easy for you to file your work and stay organized. You can click this link to view the corresponding gif in it's own browser tab.
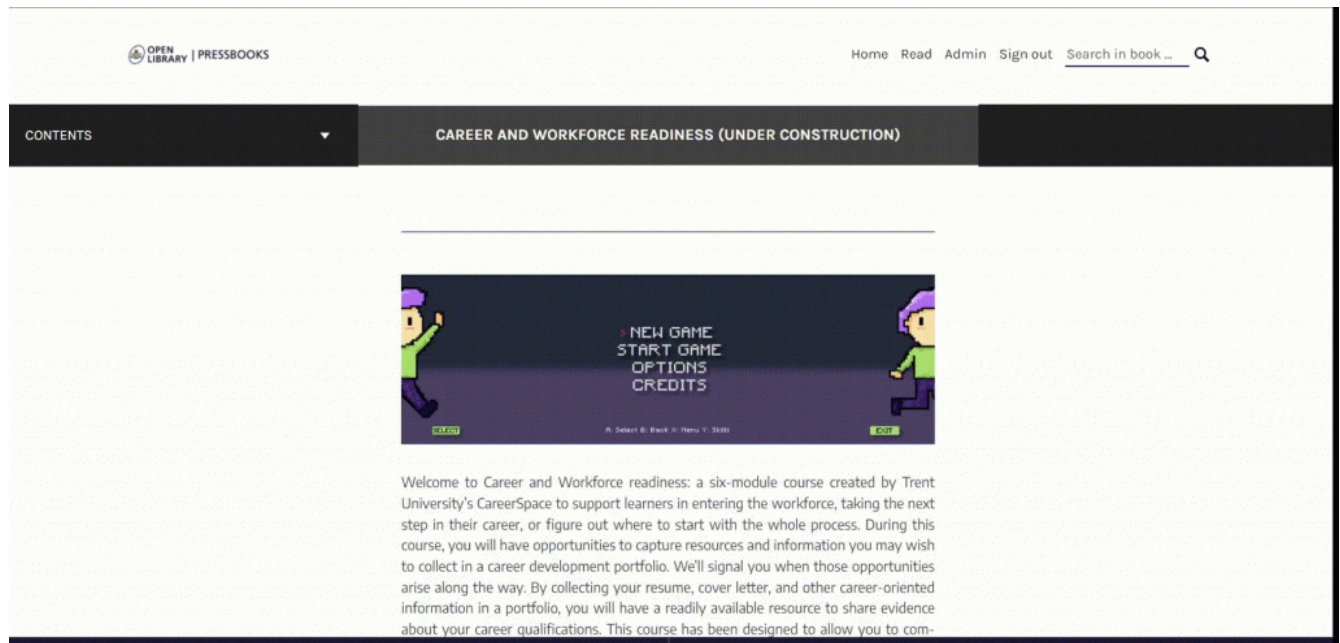
Icons to Look For

Throughout the modules, you'll notice that we signal certain activities or ideas with specific icons. We'll outline their meanings for you below:

When the see the scroll and pen, that means that **you're looking at the Learning Objectives for that module**. Learning objectives can always be found at the very start of any module.

When you see this manila folder, it means that **you're currently being presented with a Portfolio Opportunity that gives you the option to export your work**.

When you see this light bulb, it means that **you're being presented with a tip, or suggestion for further reading**.

How the Portfolio Works

While working through the modules, you'll be presented with various opportunities to practice or reflect on concepts, and then export your work in the form of a document. To help you catalog everything you're soon to create, we've made this downloadable Portfolio Folder for you and organize documents in. The portfolio activities found in each of the 6 modules will all have corresponding folders–so when you export and download your work, make sure to file it straight away into the appropriate place!

Download the empty portfolio and get started by clicking this link.

In designing this resource for you, our goal was to have you walk away with actionable strategies and material to help you in your journey forward–whether that be in learning more about what you bring to the table, how to go about search for the right job, or landing your dream gig. The idea is that when you're done, instead of trying to remember everything you thought about and worked on, you'll have a file chock-full of useful stuff ready to go!

Media Attributions

- Course Introduction via CareerSpace
- Content and Buttons Example
- Portfolio Activities Example
- Portfolio Filing Example
- Scroll With Pen via CareerSpace
- Document File via CareerSpace
- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION AND ARTICULATION
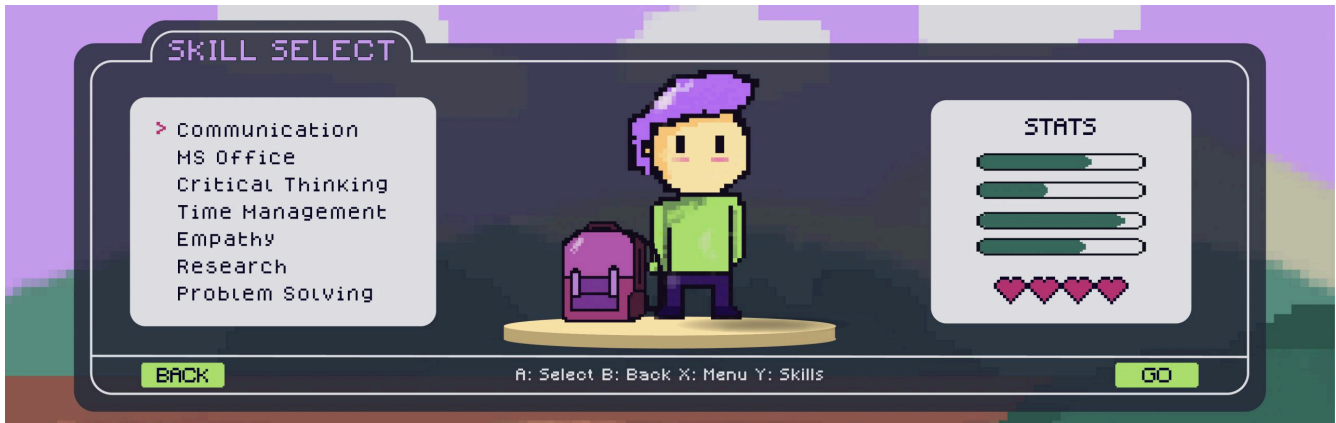
Welcome to Skills Identification, the first of six modules designed to help you develop your career. In this module, you will learn about today's most important employability skills, identify the skills you already have – along with some you may wish to develop further – and articulate your skills in a way that employers understand. And you'll walk away with plenty of valuable resources to add to your personalized career development Portfolio – resources you can use for your own career development going forward.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module you will:

- Identify the employability skills you've developed already, such as from work experience, education, and work-integrated and co-curricular experiences
- Identify the employability skills most desired by employers in Canada today
- Express the skills you have in a way that communicates your value to employers
- Value skills articulation as a means of furthering your career

- Target some employability skills for further development

By the end of the module you will have completed the following portfolio activities:

- Express the difference between **technical** and **transferable skills**
- List some potential challenges being faced by organizations today
- Reflect on your relationship to the skills framework by exploring your previous experiences
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses and rate your employability skills
- Sort your strengths and weaknesses with the **skill card sorter**
- Search the **O*NET database** for relevant occupational information
- Articulate your skills using the **STAR Framework**
- Craft effective accomplishment statements
- Reflect on your work in this module and create a skill development goal

Remember to have your portfolio folder downloaded and ready so that you have a place to collect all your work! You can download a pre-crafted, empty portfolio folder that has already been organized by clicking this link.

Media Attributions

- Module 1 via CareerSpace
- Scroll With Pen via CareerSpace
- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

WHAT ARE SKILLS?

Why are skills important for employment?

Before we talk about the skills employers are looking for, the skills you have, and the skills you might wish to develop, let's start by talking about what we mean by the term "skill".

According to Employment and Social Development Canada's [Skills and Competencies Taxonomy](#), a skill is a capacity that you have developed – or may be able to develop – to be effective in a role, a function, a task, or a job. So, a skill is not something you're born with – it's something you cultivate. For example: since you are taking this module, we know that somewhere along the way in your life, you've developed some computer skills.

There are many different types of skills, and many ways to categorize them. In the world of work, one approach is to think about them as either occupation-specific skills – ones that apply specifically to your line of work – or as general employability skills, or "transferable skills" – skills that can be developed in one area, but also "transferred to" or used in another area.

Think about it – a person seeking work as a dental assistant will definitely need certain skills that a person seeking a job in social work will not, and vice versa. At the same time, they'll both likely need certain skills that are not just specific to the job they do, but that are helpful and valued in many different workplaces, like communicating effectively with others.

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Portfolio Reflection #1 – Specific or Transferable?

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=5#h5p-5

Workplaces today are dealing with change at a pace that is faster than ever. Research shows that employers are looking for people who can bring to the workplace the skills needed to address not just the problems not just of today, but those of the future.[1][2][3]

When you understand what skills employers are looking for, you can better communicate your talents to employers, and signal to them that you can meet their needs and bring real value to their workplace. This is why learning about the skills you have, along with the skills employers are looking for, is so important for your career development.

What are the most important skills for employability today?

If you were conducting your own research of what skills today's employers say are the most important for a

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1. Mercer. (2019). Global talent trends 2019: Connectivity in the human age. https://www.mercer.ca/content/dam/mercer/attachments/north-america/canada/ca-2019-global-talent-trends-study-report.pdf
2. Pretti, T. J., Etmanski, B., and Drewery, D. W. (2021). Development and validation of a future ready talent framework. International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 22(3), 369-383.
3. World Economic Forum.(2018). The future of jobs report 2018. https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018

successful career, you might be surprised to see how many organizations are talking about this, and how many approaches there are to identifying those skills. So, we've taken the best, most current information out there to arrive at a skills framework that you can use to see what skills employers are looking for, to identify and assess your own skills, and to determine which skills you might think about targeting for further development.

In just the past 10 years, technological advances alone have transformed business practices and the way people work. The workforce of tomorrow is expected to include more technology, automation, and use of artificial intelligence; a stronger focus on privacy and security, human values, and mental health; along with more flexible work, diversity and inclusion.[4]

All organizations – from workplaces, to community groups, to project teams – face change. In a world where the pace of changing is growing, being able to anticipate and respond well to the problems that arise from change is important.

Portfolio Reflection #2 – Organizational Challenges

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=5#h5p-2

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4. Amador de San José, C. (13-Dec-2019). Future of Work: 20 Ways Work will Change in 2020. https://allwork.space/2019/12/future-of-work-20-ways-work-will-change-in-2020/

Media Attributions

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- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

IN-DEMAND SKILL AREAS

Shaping Our Skills Framework

In this section, we'll be taking a closer look at 8 skill areas. Each area will identify abilities that are important to consider when it comes to your skills framework:

- Technology & Execution
- Problem Solving
- Risk Management & Personal Development
- Creativity & a Learning Mindset
- Communication & Inclusion
- Collaboration & Information Sharing
- Adaptability & Balance
- Stress Management

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is the Canadian federal government's agency which is responsible for improving the standard of living for all Canadians by developing a highly-skilled labour force.. In Spring 2021, ESDC launched a new Skills for Success model. It defines a number of key skills needed by Canadians to participate in work, and presents a means for thinking about "how skills translate to job performance in ways that drive business outcomes". Many of those skills reflect the very same employability skills we just mentioned.

Let's look at each of these skills categories, after which you will have an opportunity to reflect on each of them. **Please note that navigating off this page before downloading your answers will mean losing your progress!**

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online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=60#h5p-89

Portfolio Reflection #3 – Skills Reflection

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=60#h5p-3

Self-Assessment of Employable Skills

Now that you are familiar with the employability skills that today's employers are looking for, it's time to rate your current level of competence with those skills! You will likely find that there are some skills you have developed really well, and others where you could use some work. That's OK! What's important is taking an honest look at where you are today, so that you can speak confidently about the skills you already have and decide what other skills could use some development.

You will be presented with a series of statements in the Google Form below. Once you've finished filling out the survey, you'll be able to have your response emailed to you so that you can track your responses and include it in your portfolio. For each statement, **think about the way you have worked in the past and how you**

tend to work right now. Be honest! This exercise will help you understand what's meant by the various key employability skills, plus you'll be identifying both the skills you have already developed, along with some you'd like to target for improvement. If you're not sure how to answer a question, go with your first intuition. Have fun!

Portfolio Reflection #4 – Employability Skills

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=60#h5p-1

Media Attributions

- Document File via CareerSpace

IDENTIFY YOUR UNIQUE SKILLS

Now that you have rated your own current levels of key employability skills, it's time to take an inventory of the other valuable skills you bring. Since everyone has a different background of experiences, everyone brings a unique mix of skills. Knowing what these are and how to describe them will be invaluable as you move forward in your career.

When people think about taking the next step in their careers, they often struggle to identify and articulate the skills they can bring to a workplace. The good news is that there are many ways of approaching this so that in the end, you have a much better appreciation of what your skills are and how to articulate them.

You've already started the process by looking at in-demand employability skills and thinking honestly about your strengths and weaknesses. In the next few activities, you'll access some resources to help you identify and assess your skills.

Career Skills

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Portfolio Activity #5 – Sort Your Skills

The Skill Sorter is an interactive drag and drop exercise developed by Queen's University that allows you to categorize additional skills in a way that considers not just your proficiency level but also how confident you feel when using each skill. This activity will help you with your own personal skills reflection and goal setting. **Once you have sorted all cards into the four quadrants, arrange them so they are all visible, then take a screenshot for your portfolio**. Doing so will not only will not only save your progress, but it will also provide you with a better sense of what skills represent areas of strength for you, as well as those you'd like to target for further development.

The **O*NET Online** web site is a great place to research the skills that are most important for your specific occupation.

Click to go to the O*NET website and look up your target occupation. Try searching by Keyword/Phrase (e.g. human resources specialist. climate change policy analyst, etc.). When you see your occupation of interest, click on it for a Summary report. Here's you'll **see lists of both technical and transferable work skills that are important for someone in your target career – make note of these**! Knowing what these important skills are can help you articulate your strengths during the job search process, as well as target other skills for development.

Skills, Tasks, and Accomplishments

To successfully accomplish a job or project, a person must complete a series of tasks. The application of **skills** allows you to perform **tasks;** the completion of tasks can lead to **accomplishments**! Take baking a cake for example. If the finished cake is the accomplishment, one of the component tasks you'll need to perform is the action of making batter. To successfully make batter, you'll need to possess the skill of appropriately using a measuring cup to measure ingredients (this relationship is depicted below).

Take a look at the Skills Reflection document that you created for your portfolio earlier on in the

module. Chances are that while reflecting on your employability skills, you came up with some examples that might not have happened exclusively "in the workplace". Skills you can apply in workplaces don't always get developed in workplaces! The skill of using a measuring cup is not exclusive to the process of baking–you can use that same skill to do a load of laundry or even feed your pet.

In this skill articulation webpage from the University of Queensland, you'll find several example lists of transferable skills you may have learned at home, at school, in your community, or in everyday life. Instead of starting with skills you think you have and then trying to come up with examples, a great way to zone in on your unique skillset is to start with your accomplishments.

Portfolio Activity #6 – Skills, Tasks, Accomplishments

Taking an accomplishment, then breaking it down into tasks and then skills, is a valuable technique for your career development activities. In the document builder below, list 3 of your biggest accomplishments. These can be projects you completed at work, school, or home. Then, below each accomplishment, list 3 or more of the tasks you carried out in order to accomplish the job or project. Finally, below each task, list 3 or more specific skills you used to carry out the task. We've provided a general example in the entry fields for you!

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=111#h5p-6

Media Attributions

- Document File via CareerSpace
- Lightbulb via CareerSpace
- Measuring Cup, by Izwar Muis via Noun Project

- Arrow, by Alice Design via Noun Project
- Mixing Bowl, by @w@n !cons via Noun Project
- Cake, by Loritas Medina via Noun Project

ARTICULATING YOUR SKILLS

Articulating your skills is itself an invaluable skill. It's something you'll make use of again and again as you progress through the modules in this course. It will help you build a resume, write a cover letter, prepare for job interviews, and more. So far you've taken an inventory of your skills, identified your strengths and weaknesses, and begun to consider the ways in which some of those skills might be transferable and applicable in a variety of vocations. In this part of the module, you're going to learn how to articulate those skills in a way that makes sense to – and gets a positive response from – employers.

Simply listing your skills is helpful, but the best way to show that you have in fact developed certain skills is to prove it with evidence: **You talk about a time when you put those skills to work**.

The STAR Framework

Knowing how to best articulate your skills will help you throughout your career, from writing a resume, to networking effectively, to answering tough job interview questions. It begins with using the STAR framework. **STAR is an acronym that stands for:**

- **Situation:** What was the situation?
- **Task:** What was your task?
- **Action:** What action did you take?
- **Result:** What was the result?

Using the STAR framework ensures that you demonstrate the skills you have in a clear and focused manner. It provides an opportunity to articulate your skills and form a foundation that prepares you to answer behavioural questions during job interviews. Becoming familiar with the STAR framework will be especially useful when writing resumes, cover letters, and preparing for interviews.

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Portfolio Activity #7 – Star Framework Examples

In the document building tool below, brainstorm a couple of examples of when you had a successful outcome in your past. Again, these can be projects you completed at work, school, or home. If you're having trouble, take a look at these examples in which the STAR framework is utilized in an interview setting.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=126#h5p-7

Accomplishment Statements

Now that you are familiar with the STAR framework, let's talk about accomplishment statements. **An accomplishment statement is your STAR story distilled down into one phrase**. Here is the simple formula for an accomplishment statement:

VERB + CONTEXT + RESULT

In one phrase, an accomplishment statement explains…

- The action you took (Verb),
- Under what circumstances (Context), and

- The positive outcome (Result).

Let's say you want an accomplishment statement to support your organization skills, accuracy, and/or database skills. You think of an example: You had to track business contacts (context), and so you organized (verb) a database, and you were commended for its accuracy (result). Your accomplishment statement could be "Organized database to track business contracts and was commended for accuracy".

Replace all text between the "Verb/Context/Positive Result" graphic and the Portfolio Activity with this: Here are some more examples of accomplishment statements:

- Welcomed customers in a friendly manner and provided clear directions for locating products
- Flexibly handled multiple projects at the same time, leading to improved office efficiency
- Interacted with diverse customers on a regular basis, providing personalized service

In the document builder below, we've made some space for you to try your hand at crafting accomplishment statements based on your own experiences. If you need to, **take a look at the work you did in practicing the STAR Framework to use as inspiration for this activity**.

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Portfolio Activity #8 – Writing Accomplishment Statements

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Targeting Skills For Development

Throughout this module, you have identified the employability skills you already possess, along with some that you may wish to target for further development. In the final activity for this section, you will articulate how you will begin developing the specific skills you identified. **Before you get started, go back and take a look at your screenshots from the Skill Sorting activity and the O*NET skills activity.** This should give you a good baseline to start selecting skills you'd like to improve.

Portfolio Activity #9 – Skill Development Goals

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=126#h5p-9

Keep your eyes open for unexpected opportunities to learn more and grow your skills. Let people know what your career goals are, and ask for suggestions. You may find opportunities in the most unlikely of places, so when someone offers a recommendationor an interesting idea crosses your path, take action!

Media Attributions

- Document File via CareerSpace
- Accomplishment Statement Example via Trent Online

SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

In this module, you've learned a lot about identifying and articulating your skills, including the key employability skills that today's employers are looking for. You've also collected plenty of valuable materials for your Career Development Portfolio. Now it's time to answer just 5 questions about what you've learned in this module. If you have trouble with this summary quiz, it might be a good idea to go back and reconsider the material a little more.

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> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=158#h5p-10*

Congratulations! You have completed this module on Skills Identification and Articulation!

In this module, you learned about today's most important employability skills, you've identified the skills you already have – along with some to develop further – and you've articulated your skills in a way that makes sense to employers. You know why it's important to explain your employability skills in a way that helps your career development.

Along the way, we've helped you to collect lots of valuable information for you to include in your own Career Development Portfolio, so that you can take those materials forward in your career development efforts.

RESUME AND COVER LETTER WRITING
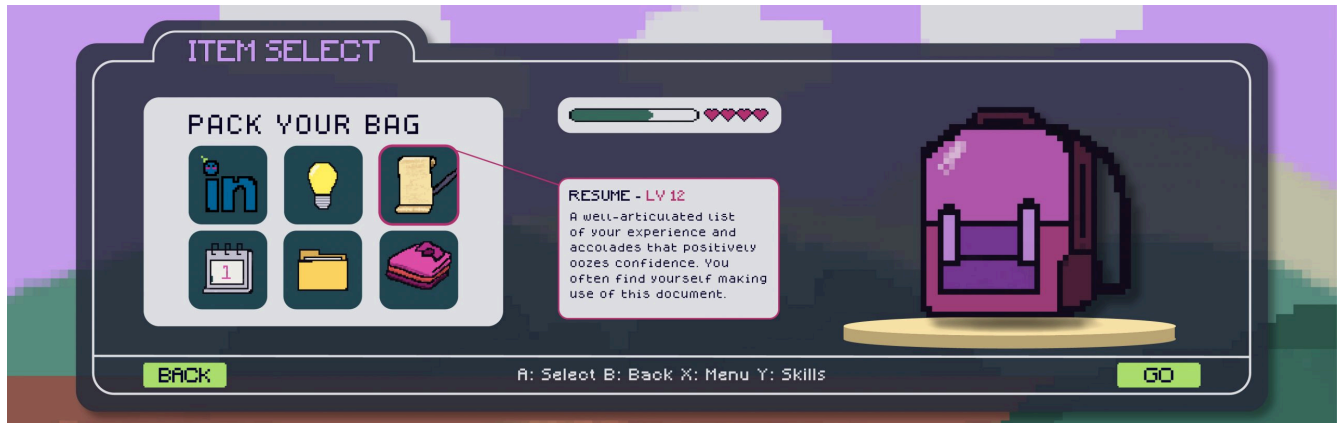
Welcome to Resume and Cover Letter writing, one in a series of six modules designed to help you develop your career. In this module, you will learn how to develop a resume and cover letter that meet the needs and expectations of employers in today's workplaces. For this course, we've researched, curated, and crafted a special group of resources specifically to help you produce a high-impact resume and cover letter so that you can further your own career, no matter where you are along your career path. We have videos, readings, and other activities all ready for you.

By the end of this module, you'll have a clear understanding of the purpose of a resume and of a cover letter. You'll be able to identify different types of resumes, and how to use them to make a good impression. You'll understand the "anatomy" of a resume and of a cover letter – what they need to contain, and how to organize them for impact – as well as the latest, most tried-and-true techniques for developing resumes and cover letters that increase your chance of success.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify the main resume formats and determine which is most appropriate to use for your job search
- Identify the typical sections of a resume, their purpose and format
- Apply techniques to develop a resume that meets the expectations of today's workplaces
- Develop a cover letter that adheres to a standardized business format
- Apply techniques to develop a cover letter that meets the expectations of today's workplaces

Do you already have a resume and/or cover letter? Whether you are starting from scratch or you have a resume and cover letter you can work from, take the opportunity as you progress through this module to make additions or adjustments to your documents. That way, by the end of this module, you can have a solid and up-to-date resume and cover letter for your Career Development Portfolio.

Remember to have your portfolio folder downloaded and ready so that you have a place to collect all your work! You can download a pre-crafted, empty portfolio folder that has already been organized by clicking this link.

Resume Knowledge Check

What do you already know about Resumes and Cover Letters?

Let's do a quick check-in. Don't worry – there is no penalty for a wrong answer.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=859#h5p-24

Media Attributions

- Module 2 via CareerSpace
- Scroll With Pen via CareerSpace
- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

COVER LETTERS

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a letter that should accompany your resume. While a resume is a highly targeted marketing document that is written in a more or less standardized way, a cover letter produces some distinct opportunities and advantages:

1. It helps you to make a good first impression on a potential employer. [1]
2. It gives you the opportunity to express enthusiasm and positive energy.
3. It demonstrates your written communication skills.
4. It gives you a chance to show that you've done some research about the employer.
5. If someone internal to the company has referred you, and has given their permission to do so, it gives you an opportunity to mention their name.
6. It gives you another way to connect your skills and experience to the requirements of the position by explaining your experience. [2]
7. It gives you a way to stand out in comparison to applicants who do not take the time to write a cover letter.

The Purpose of a Cover Letter

In addition to the advantages we've just discussed, there are 3 main purposes for a cover letter: [3]

1. To identify the position to which you are applying.
2. To convince the employer why they should invite you to an interview.
3. To request contact (or inform the employer how you will follow-up).

Just as with a resume, writing a cover letter is not an exact science. In this module, we provide you with solid

1. https://ca.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/what-is-a-cover-letter
2. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/job_search_letters/cover_letters_1_quick_tips/index.html
3. https://owl.uwo.ca/access/content/group/d7c559cd-6048-4288-bf19-9a39203d3c41/Developing%20a%20Resume%20and%20Cover%20Letter%20-%20Storyline%20output%20-%20Dec%209/story_html5.html

guidelines, but there are a variety of ways to write a cover letter to meet employer expectations while still letting your unique voice come through. There are many freely available examples of cover letters to peruse and explore.

Cover Letter Content and Format

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*https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=260#h5p-21*

Using a Job Posting to Craft a Cover Letter

You've already learned that a job posting can yield valuable information – such as keywords – that you can use to craft a high-impact resume. That information is also very valuable to consider when composing a cover letter.

Let's say you've found this posting and you plan to apply:

Position	Copywriter
Employer	AAA-Plus Media Inc.
170 Dry Creek Drive	
Yourtown, ON M1M 1M1	
Start date	As soon as possible
Source	Job Bank
Education	College/CEGEP or equivalent

Experience   +1 year experience in copywriting and editing an asset

Skills   Supervise team of staff; Co-ordinate projects

Work Setting   Advertising, marketing, and public relations agency

Work Conditions   Fast-paced environment; Attention to detail; Tight deadlines

Personal Suitability   Flexibility; Team player; Organized; Able to work independently

Specific Skills   Study and determine selling features of products and services.

Write text for advertisements, commercials, and social media.

How to apply   Email aaaplus.recruitment@gmail.com

Here's what a **cover letter** might look like for that posting. Take a look at the anatomy of the letter and pay attention to the ways in which the example specifically utilizes language from the posting itself:

1. Position: quickly identifies the name of the sought after position
2. Employer: names the company or employer that posted the position
3. Source: outlines where and in what capacity they found the job posting
4. Education: establishes that they are soon to satisfy the requisite degree-level
5. Experience: specifies that they have several years experience performing relevant work
6. Skills: mentions that they have experience in co-ordinating projects
7. Work Setting: notes that they have experience working in marketing and media content development
8. Work Conditions and Personal Suitability: takes language directly from the job posting and personally contextualizes it with a description of their previous experience
9. Specific Skills: illustrates that they have prior experience in studying products and then writing about them (which is what this job will specifically require them to do)

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online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=260#h5p-25

[Click here to view Casey's Cover Letter Example as a PDF](#)

Portfolio Opportunity #14 – Cover Letter Reflection

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=260#h5p-29

Cover Letter Examples

Sometimes the best way to get a feel for writing your cover letter is to explore a range of examples. [Indeed has compiled a wide range of cover letter samples that are organized by target jobs and industries](#). Additionally, [the University of Virginia also provides discipline-specific cover letter examples](#).

When writing your cover letter, be sure to use an upbeat and enthusiastic tone and use words that evoke a feeling of self-confidence (words like "certain" and "positive" for example).

In understanding the need to specifically address the needs of the employer, and contextualize your own experience, you'll be able to identify, emulate, and craft effective, targeted cover letters.

Media Attributions

- Document File via CareerSpace

SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Since completing the Pre-module knowledge check at the start of this module, you've learned a lot about resumes and cover letters. Are you ready to test your knowledge again? Let's go!

> 🖳 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=274#h5p-24*

Congratulations! You have completed this module on Resumes and Cover letters. In this module, you learned about the nature, purpose, and format of a resume and a cover letter. You know what the different types of resumes are and which type you can use to make the best impression on an employer. You know what a resume and a cover letter should contain, as well as how to organize them for impact. Along the way, you've learned current approaches for developing resumes and cover letters that will increase your chance of career success. You've also had the opportunity to collect valuable information for your Career Development Portfolio to take forward in your career development efforts.

In the next module... [placeholder text for later]

Additional Resources

Want to learn more? Check out these additional resources on resume and cover letter development.

- [Irresistible Resume Writing Tips by Trailhead](#)
- [Learn what Harvard University says about resume and cover letters](#)
- [Tips for Creating a Great Cover Letter from the Goodwill Community Foundation](#)
- [A 4-page summary from Queen's University with additional tips for crafting cover letters](#)

RESUMES

An Overview of Resumes

A resume is a one- to two-page document that sums up a job seeker's qualifications for the jobs they're interested in[1]. Your resume includes your relevant experience, skills, education, and accomplishments. It helps you show what you can do, and convinces an employer that you are qualified and would be a good hire [2].

The purpose of your resume is to get you an interview! Your resume is your personal marketing tool: it describes and proves your accomplishments, skills, experiences, and knowledge in a way that is concise and persuasive. Because it is targeted to the reader, your resume needs to be tailored each time you apply for a new position.

Indeed is the #1 job site in the world, with over 250 million unique visitors every month. The indeed.ca web site offers free access to job seekers to search for jobs, post resumes, and research companies. This module includes several sources from the Indeed Career Guide.

A note about Indeed's videos: You will be invited to like and subscribe to the Indeed web site, but this is not necessary for this module – it's purely optional for you.

Myths and Facts

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-18

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1. https://www.pongoresume.com/articles/391/what-is-a-resume-a-brief-overview.cfm
2. https://resumegenius.com/blog/resume-help/what-is-a-resume

Types of Resumes

There are essentially 2 main types of resume. The type you choose to use will depend on your unique circumstances, especially regarding the particular job you are applying for.[3].

> There is no "one best way" to write a resume, whether chronological or functional. In fact, some say there is even a third resume format – the "combination" or "hybrid" resume – that combines the chronological and functional approaches in order to make the resume as impactful as possible for the situation. For example, a hybrid resume can be useful for people with relevant knowledge and experience gained from education and practicum .

First is the most common type, **the chronological resume**. This type of resume is organized by your job history over time, and is a good choice if you have strong experience related to the target job.

The second type of resume is **the functional resume**. This type of resume is organized by categories of your relevant skills and accomplishments. It is a good choice if you have an employment history that is unrelated to the job you're applying for, or your experience is limited, or contains gaps.

Using headings from resume examples or templates can be a good place to start when developing and organizing your resume. Below, you'll find an example of both a chronological and functional resume, respectively. These examples will recur throughout the module and we'll provide more details later on how they take different approaches to presenting your experience and skills. You may wish to download the examples via the links below so that you can follow along in a way that suits you.

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3. www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-resume-employers-will-notice

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>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-22*

Click here to view the Functional Resume example as a PDF

Click here to view the Chronological Resume example as a PDF

In addition to our examples above, if you're a student or graduate, we recommend taking a look at the resume reference guide made available by Queen's University You'll find examples within the guide that speak to a range of unique histories and specializations. As with the two examples above, you can download the one down below and follow along as you work through the module.

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>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-19*

Click here to view Casey's Resume example as a PDF

Resume Format

While the format of a resume can vary depending on the situation, there are some guidelines that can help you develop a standard resume:

1. Your resume ought to be between 1 and 2 Letter-sized pages (8.5 x 11") with 1" margins on all sides.
2. Using headings and sections will help give structure to the content of your resume. It'll also produce an optimal amount of white space, which will make it more pleasing to the eye.

3. You'll want to make sure that your font choice is consistent throughout the resume, that the font size of the body is between 10 and 12 points, and that the text is free of spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors.

4. Make sure you're using a sans-serif font like Calibri, Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, Trebuchet MS or Verdana.

5. Be sure to establish consistency with things like dates or bulleted lists (don't switch between bullets and numbers part way through)

TIP: A sans-serif font is a typeface that does not contain any superfluous flourishes—there is nothing extra that has been added.

serif	sans serif
Serif → **B** ← Serif	**B**
"Georgia"	"Arial"

Baskerville is an example of a "serif" font: its letters have a small line added.

Helvetica is an example of a no-serif or "sans serif" font: Its letters have no small line added.

Keep in mind that you can be flexible with headings—here are a few examples to keep in mind:

- The order and titles of your sections may vary based on whether you use a chronological or functional format.
- You do not have to separate paid and unpaid experience into 2 separate sections (e.g., Employment History vs. Volunteer Work). Instead, you can combine them under 1 "Relevant Experience" heading.

- You can have a separate section devoted to what would be of particular interest or value to the employer. For example, if you are applying for a job in marketing, and you have related experience, you could have a section devoted solely to your marketing skills, knowledge and/or experience (this is the "functional resume" approach we discussed earlier).

Portfolio Opportunity #10 – Resume Reflection

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Resume Content

Every resume can be expected to contain – and should contain – some basic information and sections, including

- Your name and contact information (address, email, phone number, LinkedIn profile URL, or link to your online portfolio if you have one);
- Information about your experiences (employment, work placements, volunteer work, or extracurricular activities);
- Information about your skills and accomplishments; and
- Information about your education.

Generally speaking, Information about key skills and accomplishments is so important that it's usually presented both early in the resume (as highlights of qualifications or a profile/skills summary) and later on

when you discuss your experience and education. The trick is to determine what information to include, what to leave out, and the order in which to place your information. We will discuss additional possible resume sections later on in this module.

Your resume is not the place to list everything you've ever done. In fact, the more targeted and concise you can be, the greater impact your resume will have. The greater the impact of your resume means the greater likelihood of your being accepted for an interview.

"When writing your resume, [...] make it as easy as possible for employers to identify the reasons why you're a great candidate. That means featuring the most important and relevant information first and removing irrelevant or outdated information". [4]

A Note on Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is a software used by many employers in their recruitment process. This software helps the employer to organize and screen/filter a large candidate pool into a shortlist of candidates for possible interviews. This means that having a basic understanding of how an ATS works – and of what an ATS looks for when deciding which resumes to mark as "yes, interview" versus "no, not the best candidate" – will help you to get past the gatekeeper so that your resume can actually be seen by a person with the power to choose you for an interview.

One thing to keep in mind is that an ATS often uses a job description or posting as a guide to finding applicants that match keywords/skills. This is why it's important to include those in your resume. Some ATS are quite sophisticated, while others are not. Since you likely don't know what type of ATS your target employer uses it can be a good idea to organize your resume so that it can successfully pass through the less sophisticated types of ATS, as especially complicated "or over-formatted page layouts with columns, charts or images can be hard for applicant tracking systems to read." [5]

There are, in fact, programs and services available to help people tailor their resumes to better pass an

4. www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-resume-employers-will-notice
5. www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-resume-employers-will-notice

ATS check. Most of these services have a fee, but some, like Jobscan, will let you try out the process once for free. This link to Jobscan also offers plenty of great information about Applicant tracking Systems, as well as more tips to optimize your resume.

Here are some best practices to pass through an ATS successfully:

- Avoid headers, footers, page numbers
- Avoid columns, tables, graphs, and images
- Spell out any acronyms
- Use bullet points instead of paragraphs
- Use keywords from the job posting, if there is one
- Submit documents in MS Word format unless instructed otherwise

Portfolio Opportunity #11 – ATS Reflection

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-27

You can also save your document in .rtf format to see how it looks in plain text. Go through the document in .rtf format, then check and remove any incorrect symbols that appear

in the document. You can then re-save the corrected document in a .docx format. How you save the file will be different depending on your word processor, but we've included an example for Microsoft Word that you can follow along with.
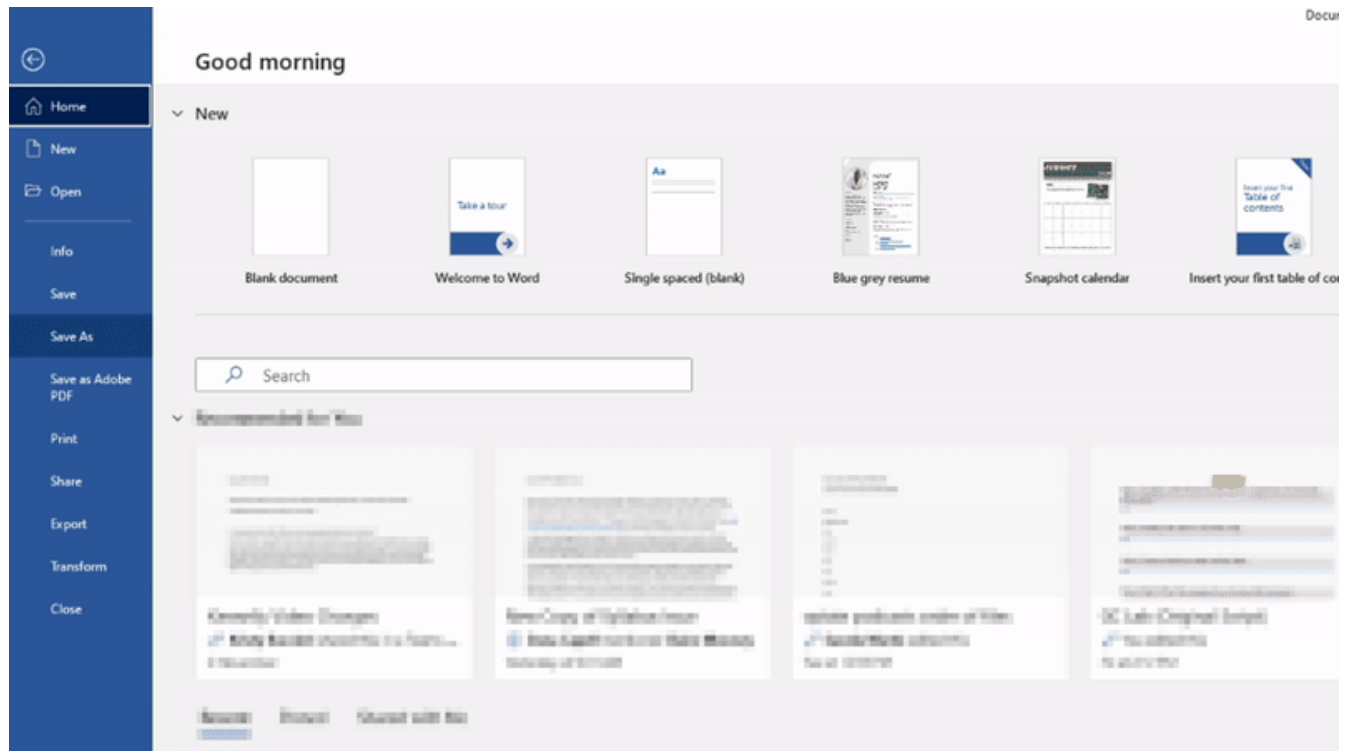
In Microsoft Word, the dropdown men underneath the text field where you would designate a title for your document is where you'll find a list of file formats (.rtf among them).

Resume Organization

If a recruiter only spends 7 seconds screening a new resume, where are they looking? Watch this video explaining what recruiters are looking at in that short time frame.

The Top Third of Your Resume

While there may be different approaches to crafting a resume, everyone can agree that the resume's most important "real estate" is the top third of page 1. There are 2 things to know about this all-important section of your resume:

First: the top of page 1 is where the reader will start reviewing your resume. The very top is where the

reader expects to be able to find your name and contact information. So, always place your name and contact information first. For example, here is the very top of the Chronological Resume example shared earlier:

Muhammad Sultan

Peterborough, ON, K9H 2H7 | (613) 235-1234 | muhammadsultan1@trentu.ca
linkedin.com/in/Muhammad-Sultan-058
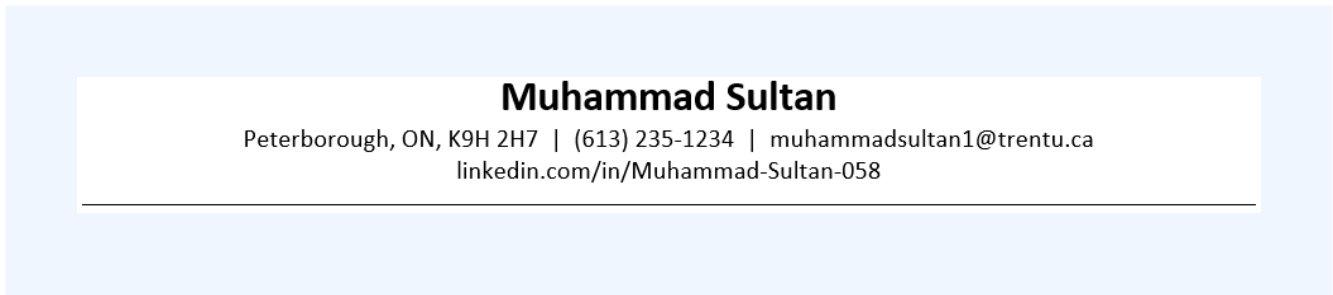
Second: as you now know, a person reading your resume will only spend around 7 seconds reviewing it before deciding whether you make a good candidate to interview. So, make it very clear right away that what you have to offer is a good match for what the reader is looking for: do this by providing a Profile or Summary of Skills section immediately after your name and contact information. To illustrate, here is that same example again with some bulleted points as it would appear below the contact information:

Muhammad Sultan

Peterborough, ON, K9H 2H7 | (613) 235-1234 | muhammadsultan1@trentu.ca
linkedin.com/in/Muhammad-Sultan-058

COMMUNITY WORKER

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience providing front-line services to diverse groups and individuals, including newcomers, youth, and persons with disabilities
- Extensive knowledge of community resources and personnel in the Peterborough area
- Experience researching gaps in community services and making recommendations to improve access
- Skilled in interviewing and educating youth with experience gained in peer support roles
- Teamwork and communication skills gained through collaborative, community-based research
- Advanced abilities with Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point

Immediately following their name and contact information, this person has indicated the work they do (or seek to do) and an easy-to-scan list of their best skills and knowledge – the Highlights – that would qualify them for the position they're looking for.

Here is another example from earlier:

CASEY HIGGUH
8 Apple Ridge
Mytown, ON L9L 9L9
casey.x.higguh@gmail.com
226-566-6555

HIGHLIGHTS of QUALIFICATIONS

Excellent analytical skills with a commitment to superior customer service.

While much briefer, this resume still uses the top third real-estate in a persuasive manner by providing their name and contact information, followed immediately by the skills and traits they want the reader to know above all else.

You will probably further elaborate on your key skills or credentials later in your resume. In other words, it's OK if it feels a bit like you're repeating yourself. What's important is to use this valuable space to catch the reader's attention and make it clear that you are worth a closer look!

How to Write Your Highlights of Qualifications

Highlights of your qualifications are just that: highlights. Highlights are bite sized chunks of information designing to give someone the important details fast. You'll want to limit yourself to 1-2 sentences in length, using a short description to quickly advertise your critical qualifications for the job goal. You can do this by following these 3 steps:

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-20

Other Resume Sections

You've placed your name, contact information, and summary of skills/profile at the top of your resume. What's next? That depends on your unique background as well as the job you're applying for. To begin, there are two questions to consider:

What other information should I include in my resume (and what should I leave out)?

Employers will expect to see information about your education and training, as well as your experience, skills and accomplishments. In some cases, providing additional information – such as certifications or membership – can contribute to the positive impression you make. Just remember that everything you include in your resume should have a purpose, and it should support your efforts to show the reader why you are the best fit for the job.

When deciding what to include in your resume, try to make sure the information is relevant and recent. Here are some practical tips and examples:

- If you have significant employment experience, you need not list any **jobs that ended over 10 years ago**. (Exception: If that's the only job experience you have that is connected to your target occupation, include it.)

- If you have completed at least one year of post-secondary education, you can usually leave your **high school education** off your resume. If you include **non-employment experience**, list only those that signal knowledge, skills, or attributes that could be relevant to the job you seek (e.g. "Scouts leader since 2019" indicates leadership and community-mindedness)

- Do not include an Interests section unless you can list activities that are linked to your field of interest. For example, a person seeking employment as an outdoor education may include an Interests section to highlight their passion for camping and kayaking.

After my name, contact information, and Highlights of Qualifications, in what order should I arrange the sections of my resume?

It is good practice to place the information or sections that most closely show you are qualified for the job earlier in your resume. For example, if you do not have any experience yet in a dentist's office but you have just completed studies to be a dental assistant, you may wish to place your Education section before your Experience section.

Education or Training Section

In this section, show what education you have engaged in. If it is a formal credential – such as a certificate, diploma, or degree – make that clear by providing the name of the credential, the institution, and the date completed (or expected to be completed). You can also provide information here about other training you have completed, such as First Aid training, WHMIS, or other training experiences that show you have the knowledge needed to succeed in the job you're applying for. Take a look at the visual example below, taken from the earlier examples, to see for yourself:

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-23

Experience Section

Experiences can come from past work projects, school projects, volunteer work, extracurricular activities, or a specific training experience. There are many types of experience that you can refer to in your resume.

In the Experience section of your resume, you get to show how and where you have accomplished results in the past through the application of your skills. This section might be organized as a chronological Work History, or it may be organized functionally, setting out your valuable skills in categories or themes.

Many resume writers find it helpful to develop the Education and Experience sections of their resume before composing the Highlights of Qualifications for the top of the resume. As indicated earlier, while you don't

want to be too repetitive, it is common – and completely acceptable – to have similar information appear in more than one section of your resume.

You do not have to provide an exhaustive list of your experiences. In fact, the more selective and concise you are – and the closer you stick to what the employer is looking for – the more impactful your resume can be. "Only include the details of your past work that are especially relevant to the work you want to do next." [6]

Chronological or Functional

"Resume format matters. Your resume is all about advertising your most valuable qualities as a candidate. If you have gaps in your work experience or are changing careers, the right resume format can help highlight your strengths while downplaying some of your weaknesses as a candidate. In a competitive job market, the right resume format can give you the edge you need to land an interview." [7]

Chronological Resume Format

The most familiar format to hiring managers, a chronological resume places the focus on your work experience and makes it easy to see what jobs you've held and when. "A chronological resume shows growth and maturity by telling the story of where you started, how you advanced and what you are working toward." [8] This format is good for job seekers with a solid history of employment, in the same or related jobs or industries, and with no significant employment gaps. The chronological resume format shows the growth of your career by talking about where you started, how you have advanced, and where you are going.

The standard chronological resume begins with your name and contact information, and is immediately followed by an Objective and a Summary (or Highlights) of Qualifications. Next provide two sections, beginning with the one most closely aligned to your job goal. One is a section for your Education and Certifications. The other is your Experience, which might come from multiple sources such as employment, volunteer work, or extracurricular activities. When listing employment history, go back no further than 10 years and list the positions you have held in reverse chronological order, beginning with your current or most

6. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-resume-employers-will-notice

7. https://resumegenius.com/blog/resume-help/resume-formats

8. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/chronological-vs-functional-resume

recent position. Be sure to provide the name of the employer, dates of employment, and 1-5 bullet points with related accomplishment statements (we will look at accomplishment statements shortly).

Example 1 (chronological resume, Experience information):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Group Leader	June 2019 - Present

Brock Mission, Peterborough, ON
- Facilitated a support group for unhoused persons offering mental health support
- Implemented case plans with individuals experiencing the negative impacts of income insecurity
- Developed and executed a learning event for young people to educate them about living wage

Volunteer Support Worker	Summer 2017, 2018

Youth Help Centre, Peterborough ON
- Provided assessment, advocacy, intervention and follow-up services to youth with social barriers
- Established ongoing supportive working relationships while accessing relevant services for clients
- Delivered dynamic presentations to community partners to maintain community connectedness

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Cashier (part time)	July 2016 - Dec. 2018

Dairy Queen, Peterborough ON

EXTRA-CURRICULARS

Helpline Volunteer	May 2018 - Present

Canadian Mental Health Association, Peterborough, ON

President	Sept. 2017 - May 2018

Trent University Psychology Undergraduate Society, Peterborough, ON

Publicity Coordinator	Sept. 2016 - May 2017

Trent University Psychology Undergraduate Society, Peterborough, ON

Example 2 (chronological resume, Experience information):

WORK EXPERIENCE

Seasonal relief worker – Mark's Work Warehouse (Nov.-Dec. 2020)

- Replenished in-store inventory which ensured ready availability of merchandise for customer purchase
- Provided assistance to customers, resulting in positive feedback

Car detailer – Avis Car Rental (May-Aug. 2019)

- Applied keen attention to detail, ensuring vehicles would meet or exceed customer expectations for cleanliness

Cashier – Sobeys (2017-2018)

- Provided friendly and speedy service to customers at checkout counter
- Cashed out following shifts with a regular balance accuracy of over 99%

Functional Resume Format

Instead of placing the focus on your work history, a functional or "skills-based" resume emphasizes the skills and experience you have that are relevant to the target job. In a functional resume, "the evidence for your value is not based primarily on your practical experience, but rather on the specific skillset you could bring to the job." [9] While de-emphasizing where you have been so far in your career, this resume format instead emphasizes your future potential by highlighting the skills you offer. The functional resume format is a good option for people who have limited relevant work experience, have significant employment gaps, or are looking to transition into a new field or industry. The functional resume format helps to portray you as a competent and skilled individual who has the potential to succeed because you are well-equipped to handle the requirements of the target job.

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9. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/chronological-vs-functional-resume

Example: Functional resume (Skills and Experience information):

RELEVANT SKILLS

Advertising & Marketing
- Organized and styled merchandise to be photographed for a giftware website
- Kept accurate current digital records of inventory, international suppliers, brokers and shippers
- Handled all aspects of online order processing in a timely manner with attention to detail
- Collaborated with stakeholders to develop a market research survey; conducted interviews, and interpreted results

Sales & Account Development
- Increased a small publication's advertising revenue through innovative social media
- Developed new distribution outlets for a special-interest magazine to expand reach
- Made cold calls and follow-up visits to retail outlets throughout the region
- Strategized with a small team to improve upon upselling approaches, resulting in increased sales

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Sales Coordinator at Jana Imports, Ottawa, ON	Summer 2017
Distribution Coordinator at Deja Vu Publishing Co, Toronto, ON	Summer 2016
Head Cashier at Bill's Dairy Products, Toronto, ON	Oct. 2014 - Dec. 2015

Earlier, we mentioned a third format: the "combination" or "hybrid" resume. If you'd like to learn more about that format, check out this article about combination resumes or download this sample of a combination resume.

Portfolio Opportunity #12 – Chronological or Functional

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-28

Accomplishment Statements

The accomplishment statement is a concept that concept that is explained in Module 1 under the "Articulating Your Skills" heading. This section will seek to position accomplishment statements as something you can make use of specifically within the context of your resume, as they are an excellent source of content for the Experience section of your resume. You might find it useful to complete the associated activity linked above, as it will ask you to craft accomplishment statements for your portfolio that you can use in your resume.

An Accomplishment Statement is a phrase that tells the story of an achievement or unique contribution you have made. It's a success story that helps demonstrate your value to the reader by providing evidence of a past achievement. Accomplishment statements are usually used in the chronological resume format.

Use the CAR acronym to develop an Accomplishment Statement:

C is for CHALLENGE/CONTEXT: What was the challenge/context/problem/issue?
A is for ACTION: What action did you take/What skills did you use?
R is for RESULTS: What was the result/the benefit of your actions? (quantify or qualify where you can)

The example below will show you what an accomplishment statement looks like when it is all put together.
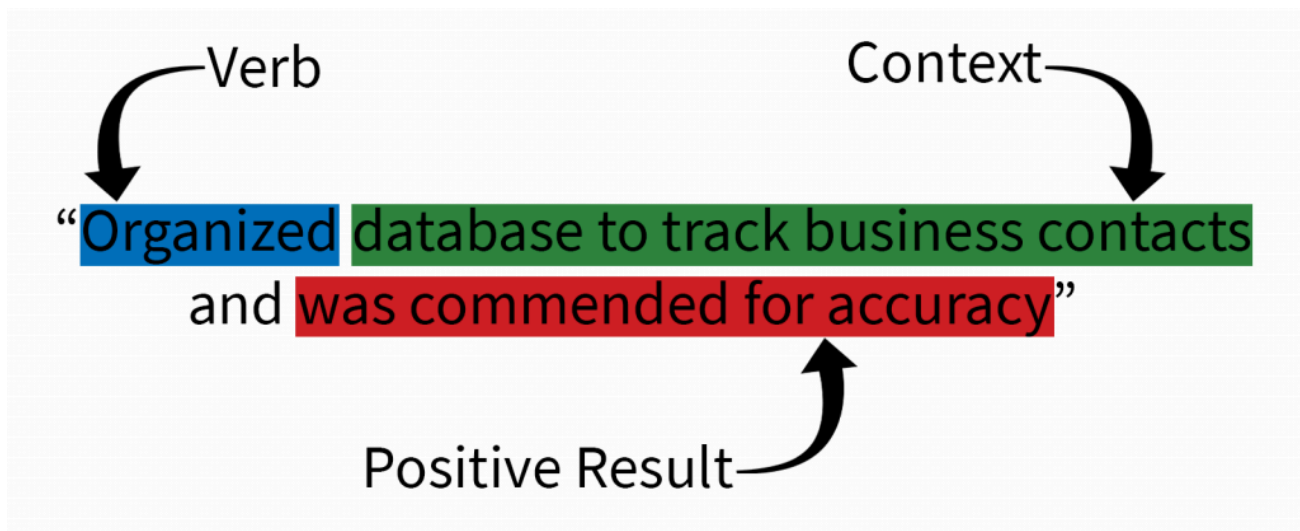
Features of an Accomplishment Statement

- It's in the form of a single phrase (in a resume, use a bullet point).
- It includes a descriptive Action verb (what you did).
- It shows a positive Result.
- Where possible, the Context and/or Result is quantified (with a number) or qualified (with a descriptor). For example: "Served customers" would become "Served over 50 customers per day"

Accomplishment Statements are not merely a list of duties: instead of saying what you have done, you show the

value you brought to the experience – and the value you can bring to your next employer. "Lead with strong action verbs and follow with an accomplishment rather than a task. Employers are interested in what you've achieved, not just what you've done." [10] If you're not sure how to describe your accomplishment, you can make use of this resource from ResumeGenius that lists over 100 resume action verbs!

Portfolio Opportunity #13 – Writing Accomplishment Statements (redux)

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=216#h5p-8

Media Attributions

- Lightbulb via CareerSpace
- Sans-Serif Font Example via Trent Online
- Document File via CareerSpace
- Saving as an .rtf File via Trent Online
- Contact Information Example via Careerspace
- Summary of Skills Example via Careerspace
- Highlights Example via Careerspace
- Chronological Experience Sample via Careerspace
- Chronological Experience Sample 2 via Careerspace

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10. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-resume-employers-will-notice

- Functional Experience Sample via Careerspace
- Accomplishment Statement Example via Trent Online

NETWORKING AND LINKEDIN

Welcome to Networking and LinkedIn, the third of six modules designed to help you develop your career. In this module, you will learn about what networking is and why it's a critical part of your career development. This includes discussions around enlarging and enriching your own network and using proven techniques to make your networking efforts count, including when working online. Plus, you'll walk away with plenty of valuable resources to add to your personalized Career Development Portfolio – resources you can use for your own career development going forward.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Describe the nature, purpose, and benefits of networking to support your career development
- Define your existing network and explore ways to expand it
- Apply techniques to maximize the impact of your networking efforts
- Craft an elevator pitch you can use as part of your networking efforts
- Apply best practices for conducting an informational interview
- Leverage social media platforms to support your networking efforts

- Demonstrate professionalism when networking online
- Create a LinkedIn profile and use LinkedIn to conduct networking activities

By the end of this module, you will have completed the following portfolio activities:

- Check your knowledge about some networking basics.
- Identify who is currently in your network.
- Make plans to connect with your dormant ties.
- Draft an "elevator pitch" you can use while networking.
- Make preparations to take part in a virtual career fair.
- Compose an introduction for LinkedIn connection requests.

Remember to have your portfolio folder downloaded and ready so that you have a place to collect all your work! You can download a pre-crafted, empty portfolio folder that has already been organized by clicking this link.

Networking Knowledge Check

What do you already know about networking? It may be a little, or it may not be much at all. Either way, we are excited to share with you the latest and greatest strategies to help make your networking efforts a success. Take a few moments to answer a few questions about networking.
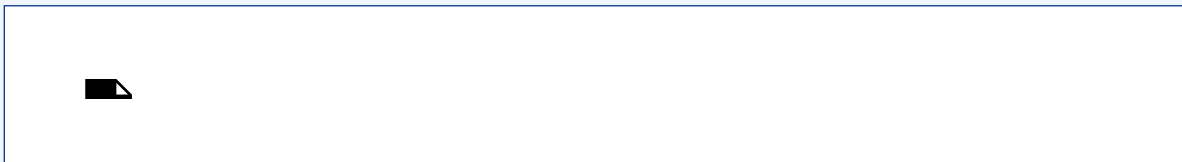
An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=861#h5p-30

Media Attributions

- Module 3 via CareerSpace
- Scroll With Pen via CareerSpace
- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking refers to building and maintaining relationships so that you can connect to career opportunities. By building professional connections and cultivating mutually beneficial relationships, you can exchange valuable advice, information, referrals, and support.

Networking is as simple as having a conversation; it can be formal or informal. Chatting with a neighbour, classmate, or co-worker is informal, while attending a career-related or professional event, such as a career fair or conference, is a more formal type of networking.

Here's an example of what networking might look like:

James will graduate next year with a degree in business. He is interested in a marketing career in the travel and hospitality industry. He knows that building connections now could help him later.

James writes down a list of names of people in his family, friends, fellow students, instructors, neighbours, and former co-workers. He chooses 5 people to connect with to discuss his future career intentions.

A former professor offers to introduce James by email to an associate who works for a major hotel chain. James introduces himself to Helene, his instructor's contact. Helene agrees to a 5-minute phone call with James to discuss her work and workplace.

Having made a good impression during the call, James is encouraged to apply for a summer job with Helene's employer. James applies and is offered the position. James continues to make connections at his summer job to increase future opportunities in his chosen career

When is the best time to start networking?

The best time to start building your network is before you need one, so start early! Developing a network takes time and ongoing effort. Make connections now: Plant seeds that may grow into opportunities later.

Start with your family, friends, neighbours, bosses, colleagues, professors. Then network with community members in your field, alumni, or people at career events. Start developing your own broad list of contacts, especially people you meet through business, educational, and social functions. The goal of this module is to learn practical methods for achieving this.

Building a network takes time, effort, and patience. You can expect to take roughly 30-100 days to build a results-producing network[1]

Who is in your network? Who could be?

In networking, we speak of strong and weak ties. Your "strong ties" include your family and friends, while your "weak ties" are people you see less frequently but with whom conversation flows when you bump into them. Based on research by Mark Granovetter, people who rely on weaker ties in their job searches have better results than those who rely on close ties.[2] This suggests you may need to stretch beyond your usual circles to help develop your career.

To build your networking confidence, you can start out by communicating with your "strong ties" or "warm contacts". This resource from Career Development Services Inc. offers resources that can help you get started! Make sure to approach this with an open mind, as you never know whom someone might know.

As you engage in networking activities, keep in mind that networking is a two-way street. Help others! Do you know someone who is looking for information? And someone else who could help? Offer to introduce them. Think of information you have that might be useful to someone and share it. Have some of your former strong ties become weak ties over time? There's a term for that, too: it's "dormant ties". Let's take a closer look at dormant ties in the next activity.

1. https://www.trentu.ca/careerspace/sites/trentu.ca.careerspace/files/documents/careerspace-sheet-NETWORKING_corrected_0.pdf
2. https://www.ft.com/content/0292a22a-883c-40d3-99ee-5e45af735cab

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Portfolio Activity #15 – Networking Reflections

Watch the video below before beginning the portfolio reflection.

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🖥️ *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=336#h5p-31

Why network?

Networking is an essential element of a job search: It greatly increases your chances of success and it helps lay the foundation for your career development over time.

At first glance, networking can seem to be about schmoozing and using people. In reality, it's a chance to make genuine connections and build your professional community. Having connections can help you get further than you could on your own.

"Making contacts in your circle of friends, family and in the broader business community is your

> key to tapping into the hidden job market and finding those jobs that never make it to the internet postings."[3]

The hidden job market

The hidden job market refers to jobs that employers do not advertise or publish externally. Often, employers will prefer to hire internally, or to use recruiters or employee referral programs to find external candidates. This can help them find high-quality candidates who will fit well into the organization, while saving on the time and costs associated with recruiting externally.

In fact, the majority of positions are filled through networking versus the traditional methods of job search like online job boards: People are often surprised to learn that 80-90% of all jobs are NOT posted online.[4] So, for your own career development strategy, it makes sense to emphasize networking first, and make applying to posted jobs as a secondary strategy. (Many people use networking as a supplement when it should be the other way around!) Since so many job opportunities are filled through less formal channels, networking helps you to tap into the hidden job market. Additionally, having an inside track to an organization can carry a lot more weight than the content of your resume or cover letter.

> "People in your network may be able to give you job leads, offer you advice and information, and introduce you to others so that you can expand your network."[5]

You know what networking is, why it's important, who's involved, and when to get started (today!). Next, let's start talking about how you can network with impact.

3. https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/tips-networking-strategies

4. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/new-survey-reveals-85-all-jobs-filled-via-networking-lou-adler

5. https://www.trentu.ca/careerspace/sites/trentu.ca.careerspace/files/documents/careerspace-sheet-NETWORKING_corrected_0.pdf

Your elevator pitch

The first tool for your networking toolkit is your elevator pitch. An elevator pitch is a persuasive speech you use to spark interest in what you can offer as an employee. It should last no longer than a short elevator ride (about 30 seconds), be interesting, and explain what makes you unique.

An elevator pitch is an excellent tool because, when networking, you may only have moments to capture someone's attention and make a good impression. So, prepare your elevator speech in advance. It should explain who you are, what you're seeking, and what you can offer. Here are some examples:

- I'm about to complete my degree and I am currently seeking a position in social work. I love to help families with small children, and I'm looking to find a position at a small community organization where I can interact directly with clients.
- I help people create attention-getting, high-converting e-commerce web sites. I love to find creative ways to customize designs and meet client needs. What can you tell me about your current web site?

Once you've crafted your pitch, practice it until it sounds natural. You can always adapt your pitch depending on the situation. For example, you can adapt your pitch to ask for information and advice.

Here's a sample introduction for a networking event that incorporates the elements of a solid elevator pitch:

Hi, I'm Darren Delaney. I see that you have experience in the food production industry. I'm currently studying chemical engineering and I'm interested in production-related work in the areas of brewing and distilling. I have some experience in quality control. May I ask you about what you do?

Portfolio Activity #16 – Drafting Your Elevator Pitch

There's no need to try to perfect your pitch right now. This activity is meant to be a starting point. Take time to revisit and work on your elevator pitch periodically as you journey through your career efforts.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=336#h5p-32*

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HOW TO GET STARTED

One good piece of news when it comes to networking is that when you are ready to start, you won't have to do so from scratch: you already have a network to build from! Building your network – extending and deepening the relationships you have – is critical for your career development. But the first step is to inventory your existing network.

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Portfolio Activity #17 – Consolidate Your Network

Take a few minutes to start brainstorming the people you already know. It can help to do this by category. If you're worried about only having a small or limited number of people, just start with those closest to you!

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Connecting with people you know

Start by reconnecting with people you know: reach out to your **existing contacts.** Share your goal of finding a new job or of taking the next step in your career. Let your connection know about the type of jobs you are seeking and your preferred field. Your connection may know of existing opportunities or contact you if something arises. Or they may be able to connect you to someone who knows about an opening.

- If it's been a long time since you've connected, do not ask for help right away. Networking should always be treated like a give-and-take relationship of mutual respect, so, where appropriate, spend some time re-warming your mutual connection before asking for help.
- Stay connected with people you know and also find out about formal events. Students can get great information from their career and academic departments. Keep your eyes open for events where you might make interesting connections.
- Be specific about what you are looking for! You might be tempted to let your contacts know that you are open to just about anything but providing specifics prompts people to think of you when opportunities arise

Reach out for new connections

Expanding your network to include new connections will open up new sources of advice for your career path and job search. Let your current connections know that you'd be grateful to be introduced to anyone they think of who might have some good advice for your career efforts. If they offer an introduction, accept it with gratitude. Even if you are not certain whether the proposed connection will lead anywhere, pursue it with curiosity and an open mind: Sometimes the most valuable connections are not readily apparent at first.

One great way to find new connections is by volunteering in areas related to your career interests. For example, opportunities at organizations you want to work for can lead to internal connections, plus it shows your target employer the value you could bring as an employee. Even if it does not lead to a job offer, volunteering in your field of interest can be an effective networking technique because it lets you meet people who work in your target field. Checking out web sites like Volunteer Ontario and Charity Village can help you in your search for volunteer opportunities.

Networking groups and events

In addition to expanding via your current connections, it is also useful to tap into networking groups and networking events. These groups and events can be excellent resources to give and get advice. Valuable **groups for networking** might include your alumni association, professional associations in your field, local chambers of commerce, clubs and community volunteer groups, and LinkedIn groups (more about LinkedIn and online networking later). These can be excellent resources to find contacts in your target field, occupation, or industry.

And don't just stop at belonging to a group: find and attend **networking events**. Some networking events are specific to an industry or profession. For example, many professional organizations support their members with networking opportunities by offering conferences or trade shows, regular lunch-and-learns, or other networking events. In addition, employers sometimes offer their own **information sessions or career events** and students can benefit from career fairs sponsored by their college, university, or educational institution. Like all networking events, **career fairs** are good opportunities to meet others, learn about what they do, and forge new relationships that can be mutually beneficial.

What is a career fair?

A career fair is an event where multiple employers meet with job seekers to provide information about career opportunities and to engage in recruitment activities. Attending a career fair allows you to connect with representatives from a variety of organizations and to learn more about the experience and qualities that employers are looking for in a hire. Meeting with company representatives at a career fair can offer you an advantage as a potential hire – since you get to know people by name – and they get to know more about you than they could just by reading your resume.

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- Document File via CareerSpace

TARGETED NETWORKING

We've talked about making connections, joining groups, and attending networking events like career fairs. Next, let's take a closer look at some specific networking strategies, namely cold calling and informational interviews.

Cold Calling & Emailing

Cold calling is the practice of contacting potential employers directly, without any prior contact, to find out about potential opportunities. Cold calling is a great complement to your other career development activities, like applying to posted jobs and networking.

Remember your Elevator Pitch, your 30-second persuasive speech to spark an employer's interest in what you can offer? Well, there's another pitch to learn about: it's your Cold Call Pitch. This is a similarly brief speech, but it is delivered during an unsolicited contact with the purpose of convincing the person to accept your resume or provide advice on advancing your career with them.

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online here:
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If you cannot reach your contact person by phone, try sending them a cold email:

1. Identify the right person to contact and locate their email address on the company web site or directory, on their LinkedIn profile, or by calling the organization directly and asking for it
2. Compose your email
3. Send your email
4. After one week, follow up with a short email if you haven't received a response

When composing your email, make sure to address the following points:

- Address the employer by name along with their preferred title.
- Introduce yourself using your full name
- Tell them where you got their name and email address
- Explain that you are looking for a new position
- State why you are interested in their company
- Say you would appreciate any advice or information regarding positions and hiring within their company

Informational interviews

An informational interview is a conversation with someone who works in your field of interest. It can be conducted in person, virtually, or by phone. The goal is to get current information that can help you better express yourself in applications and interviews and make informed career choices. An informational interview is not about asking for a job. Instead, it is a way to learn more by tapping into someone else's experience.

Conducting informational interviews will help you:

- Learn more about the career paths that interest you
- Gather valuable, industry-specific information
- Gain insider tips on the education, skills and experience needed in your target career
- Market yourself during job searches
- Build contacts in your target industry or workplace

Asking and preparing for an informational interview

You must ask for informational interviews and you are often asking someone you don't know personally. Generally, people are willing to help and will often see it as a compliment to be asked to talk about their expertise. Just be polite and professional and do not take up too much of their time. Aim to ask for no more than 20 minutes of the person's time for an informational interview.

When asking for an informational interview, you'll want to keep things succinct (no more than 30 seconds if you were to ask over the phone). After introducing yourself and establishing your connection to them, the idea is to briefly summarize your background and career interests as they relate to the information you think the person can provide, followed by briefly stating your request for a conversation.

Here is a sample email request for an informational interview:

Hello, my name is Dale Winters. I recently spoke with Li Wang and she recommended I reach out to you for information about careers in elder population psychology.

I'm currently studying psychology at Trent University and I'm interested in clinical psychology and assessment. I'm exploring the possibility of pursuing work with senior populations and I'm curious about various career paths in both research and clinical work.

I'm looking for some advice on choosing a career focus in psychology and what I might start doing now to improve my opportunities in the future. I'm interested in hearing about your experiences within the field and any perspectives you've developed.

I understand that private practice is very busy and I see that your hours vary throughout the week. I'm wondering if you might be able to find time to have a conversation either over the phone, by Zoom, or in-person in the next 2-3 weeks. If you are able, please provide a few times

that work best for you as I should be able to arrange my schedule to accommodate it. Thank you for your time and I look forward to the possibility of hearing from you.

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ONLINE NETWORKING

Networking as a valuable career development strategy is nothing new. What has changed, however, is how networking occurs. Many networking activities are now held, and can be found, online. Since networking is all about connecting with other people, if people are online then online networking should form part of your strategy.

Professional networking events can be found on public platforms, or through direct communications from various groups. Some groups and organizations use Eventbrite to advertise their events, such as conferences and networking: Try a "networking" keyword search, or browse by category, date, or region. You can also try searching for networking events in your area using Meetup or reaching out to postsecondary institutions you have attended to see what is available for students or alumni. Keep in mind that organizations might also use other names like "fireside chat" to indicate a networking event.

To hear directly from groups about upcoming events, connect with professional associations or search for groups on LinkedIn. Charity Village has [a list of professional associations across Canada](#) to help you get started on your search.

Preparing for online networking events

Preparing for networking events is only somewhat different when they are online. Follow the same suggestions given earlier to prepare for these events, but take a few extra steps for events that will be conducted virtually. Here are some additional considerations when preparing to attend an **online event**:

- Find a quiet, private, and well-lit space.
- Position and test your technology.
- Ensure your background is tidy and professional.
- Have information and resources at hand, including your resume, job descriptions, tools to take notes, etc.
- Turn off or mute all electronic distractions.
- Be prepared for fast-paced chatting, for example by having well-crafted, error-free questions prepared in advance so that you can cut-and-paste them during live chats.

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Portfolio Activity #18 – Preparing for Networking

Check out this video by Candid Career for tips on how to approach virtual career fairs:

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=367#h5p-54

Social media and networking

You can learn a great deal about prospective employers and make great network contacts by using social media. In addition to a traditional online presence through web sites and blogs, many employers have a presence on social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

Did you know that Gen-Z – those born between approximately 1997 and 2012 – are expected to make up nearly a third of the workforce by 2030? These folks average rougly 6 hours every day on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This is why many employers are increasingly looking for future employees on social media platforms. For example, instead of looking for resumes and cover letter, many employers – from HBO to Hasbro to Shopify – are inviting hashtagged video applications on TikTok.

Look for organizations on the various social media platforms where they may have a presence so that you can follow or connect with the ones that interest you. This is a great way to identify key employees in the company, build connections with them, and engage with their content. Over time you could develop a rapport and ask them for an informational interview.

One example of networking with social media is through the use of **Clubhouse**, an audio-chat social networking app. Formerly an invitation-only app, Clubhouse offers a place for people to gather and discuss a variety of topics and trends. It's an interactive and audio-based method to help build your network. Here's how:

Get a free Clubhouse account. You'll also get notifications based on the data you provide upon subscribing. Then, start listening in on the conversation in events that resonate with you, such as those in your field. If someone shares a tip or idea you find noteworthy, connect with them through their Instagram or Twitter account and let them know. If you have something valuable to add, ask to be on the stage. This could increase your followers on the app, as well as your chances of receiving private messages later that could enlarge your network. You can even create your own event and invite those in your network to join.

Your (Online) Reputation

Your online reputation is based on what you post about yourself and others online, including posts, tagged photos, and forums.

> "Most employers check out your online presence and use it as a screening tool when considering you for an interview or job offer. Therefore, you need to manage your digital content, as well as be aware of what others are posting about you."[1]

Employers often look at social media accounts of prospective employees, so be sure to keep all of your social media information positive and professional. Here's how:

- No matter the platform, be sure to have a professional, current profile.
- Use a professional photo and be consistent across all of your social media profiles.
- Remove posts that could be considered inappropriate or offensive.
- Set up your privacy carefully.
- Update your profile regularly with relevant information.

> "Google yourself. Is there information you would prefer professional contacts not see? Ask your friends to un-tag you and update your professional online presence to improve your search results."[2]

Getting started with LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional social networking website where you can post a professional profile, research

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1. https://www.trentu.ca/careerspace/sites/trentu.ca.careerspace/files/documents/LinkedIn_corrected%20(1).pdf
2. https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/tips-social-media

employers, apply for jobs, and network. As of August 2021, the social networking site had over 18 million members in Canada alone[3] – with over 72% of employers using it for recruiting as of 2020[4] – making it a great place to seek out and make new contacts. Using LinkedIn is a great way to let your contacts know you are looking for work, to ask people for advice about what working in your target career is like, and to find out what you can do to be competitive.

There are a lot of things you can do with LinkedIn, and the more you'd like to do, the more there is to learn. In this module, we focus on the basics to get you started. Start with this video from Trent's Careerspace team for an overview on getting started with LinkedIn:

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In order to get started with LinkedIn, you'll need to set up a profile for yourself and learn the basic ins and outs. Here's a few short videos for you to watch and get started with:

- Watch this video on how to set up a LinkedIn account if you do not already have one
- Watch this video on How to add your photo to your LinkedIn profile
- Watch this video on the basics for navigating LinkedIn

Your LinkedIn profile is where people on LinkedIn can learn about who you are as a professional, your education, experience, skills, and career goals. LinkedIn profiles can be reviewed by anyone, so keep your profile

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3. https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/tips-linkedin
4. https://www.jobvite.com/blog/hiring/what-every-job-seeker-should-know-jobvites-2020-recruiter-nation-survey/

private until you have had the opportunity to complete it. When you're ready to get started, <u>check out this video on how to create a LinkedIn profile</u>.

How to network using LinkedIn

Develop your professional network using LinkedIn by connecting with the people you already know and building your network from there. Your first step should be to locate and connect with your current contacts. Remember to stay in touch with your connections (versus contacting them only when you need help).

Once you start building your network, look at the connections of your contacts. If you search for a contact by name, LinkedIn will show you if/how you are connected.

1ST DEGREE A 1st-Degree contact is someone to whom you are already connected.

2ND DEGREE A 2nd-Degree contact is someone to whom you have a mutual contact.

When networking on LinkedIn, try to keep these best practices in mind:

- **Important:** When contacting someone new, instead of using the default LinkedIn connection request, briefly introduce yourself and state why you want to connect, such as for general career information or advice.
- Follow companies that interest you. Find people who work there and ask them for an informational interview.
- Join groups that are related to your field or target industry. Monitor discussions for a while, then join in and make informed contributions to discussions.

- Search for jobs: you can filter by location, company, experience level, and more!

Portfolio Activity #19 – LinkedIn Introductions

By now we hope you have LinkedIn account and a LinkedIn profile, and you have some familiarity with navigating the LinkedIn site. Let's practice using some of the skills you'll want to use in LinkedIn.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=367#h5p-55

Additional Resources

Find more tips here for using LinkedIn, such as Networking Etiquette, managing your network and newsfeed, and building your brand.

More resources to maximize the benefit you can get from using LinkedIn:

- Watch this video to learn how to add connections on LinkedIn.
- Watch this video to learn how to post a status update on LinkedIn:
- Watch this video to learn how to follow companies on LinkedIn:
- Watch this video to learn how to use LinkedIn messages:

- Watch this <u>video to learn how to look for jobs on LinkedIn</u>:

Media Attributions

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- Lightbulb via CareerSpace
- Degrees of Contacts

SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Congratulations! You've completed this module on Networking and LinkedIn.

In this module, you learned about what networking is and why it's a critical part of your career development. You've learned some strategies for enlarging and enriching your own network and you've collected some proven techniques to make your networking efforts count. Along the way, we've helped you collect some valuable information and resources that you can include in your own portfolio so that you can take them forward in your career development efforts.

The next module in this series is all about job search techniques and the labour market. You'll learn strategies to develop and execute a job search plan, locate job opportunities that match your career targets, and expand your understanding of where you fit in the world of industry and occupation.

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Welcome to Job Search Strategies and the Labour Market, the fourth of six modules designed to help you develop your career. In this module, you will learn about the labour market, sectors, and industries; you'll explore 3 useful web sites (the NAICS, the NOC, and the Job Bank); you will learn about regulated occupations; and you will develop specific skills to support your job search efforts, including where to look for jobs, best practices for applying, and managing your job search. Plus, you'll walk away with plenty of valuable resources to add to your personalized Career Development Portfolio – resources you can use for your own career development going forward.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Navigate basic labour market information;
- Use sector and industry information to explore employment options;
- Navigate the NAICS, NOC, and Job Bank web sites to support your job search efforts;

- Explore multiple additional job search web sites;
- Apply best practices for applying to jobs; and
- Develop a tailored, practical job search plan.

Activities (overview)

By the end of the module, you will have completed the following portfolio activities:

- Locate labour market information relevant to your career goals
- Explore the NAICS, the NOC, and the Job Bank
- Identify niche boards for your job search resource kit
- Identify top tips when applying for jobs online
- Determine any regulatory bodies or societies associated with your target occupation
- Set SMART goals for your job search
- Develop a job search plan

As you work through this module in particular, you'll likely come across all sorts of useful spaces, lists, and links online. We recommend keeping a list or a folder in your browser bookmarks so that you can come back to these later on.

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- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

THE LABOUR MARKET

The term "labour market" refers to the supply of and demand for labour, along with wage rates. Therefore, if we wonder about unemployment rates, the availability of work in certain industries or occupations, or how much one might expect to earn (or pay) for particular work in particular regions, we are talking about the labour market.

Why is this important for job searching? Well, having general knowledge about the labour market can help you understand various factors that affect your job search efforts, including decisions you make around where to look for work, which jobs employers are hiring for, and what the range of pay is.

Sectors and Industries

An i**ndustry** is "a group of companies that are related based on their primary business activities", and industries can be grouped together into larger categories called **sectors**[1]. In Canada, we use the NAICS to organize companies into industries and sectors. Canada uses the North American Industry Classification System (or NAICS) to define how sectors and industries are organized.

Using the NAICS can form a valuable part of understanding the job market and informing your job search. For example, let's say you are planning to apply for a job but you're not certain what the employer does. A simple web search using NAICS and the company name can help.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=518#h5p-64

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1. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/industry.asp

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=518#h5p-65

Occupations: The NOC and the Job Bank

An occupation is "a person's usual or principal work or business, especially as a means of earning a living"[2]. The National Occupational Classification (NOC) is a reference framework for all occupations in Canada: it provides descriptions of over 30,000 job titles, including information on the education and experience required to work in each occupation.

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The Government of Canada's Job Bank web site is a great place to search for jobs, set up job alerts, learn about the prospects for employment in your target occupation, and more.

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2. https://www.dictionary.com/browse/occupation

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Have you completed (or will you complete) studies in a particular field, but you're not quite sure what that means for a target occupation? The Job Bank's career planning tool will allow you to search occupations by 'field of study'. Your home insitution will also likely have resources that you can make use of, such as Trent University's "What Can I Do With My Degree?" index.

Occupational regulations, associations, and societies

A number of occupations have specific requirements that candidates must meet beyond a certain level of education or experience. For example, there are a number of regulated professions in Ontario, meaning the law prevents anyone from practicing in the occupation unless they have the proper license or certification. Some examples include physicians, teachers, and psychologists.

For some occupations, you must obtain a specific license or certification and/or be a member of a specific association. The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials offers a search function to help you identify if your target occupation is linked to any regulatory authorities and/or professional associations.

Let's say you're planning a career as a primary school teacher. Follow the instructions below and then complete the following activities:

- Go to the CICIC's Directory of occupational profiles for Ontario.
- In the blank under Keywords, type **"teacher"**.
- From the options that appear, click **the one that ends in (CNP 4032)**.

- Scroll down and click **Refine Search**.
- From the results (at the bottom), click **Elementary school and kindergarten teachers**.
- Scroll to "Contact the regulatory authority" and click ON for Ontario.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=518#h5p-67*

Portfolio Activity #20 – Labour Market Research

Let's practice searching for Ontario Labour Market Information for details about your target occupation!

- Go to the Ontario labour market web site.
- In the text box, start typing **your goal job title or related occupational keywords**
- From the options that appear, click the one that best describes your target occupation.
- Click Search.
- Click the occupation link that appears under "Total occupations found".
- You should now see the Ontario labour market profile for your target occupation.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online*

here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=518#h5p-68

If there are relevant organizations listed for your target occupation, it's wise for you to investigate what they are in case they're important or even necessary for you to secure employment in your target occupation. Remember to take note of any web site URLs so you can continue to research this important aspect of your target occupation! Depending on a number of factors including where you live, it may be practical to focus your job search efforts in industries where your occupation is most likely to be employed. Lastly, don't forget about the NAICS! You can look up each of your top 3 industries on the NAICS and click through the industry groups to explore prospects with employers in various industry subcategories.

To find labour market information for regions across Canada, go to the Trend Analysis section of the Job Bank. Here you can explore the labour market by occupation, region, wage, and prospects for employment.

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JOB SEARCHING

You've got a good idea of where you want to take your career, and you're ready to start looking for your next exciting opportunity. Let's talk about strategies for a successful job search.

#1 – Focus

To be successful, your job search efforts need to be targeted. Otherwise, you can easily become overwhelmed and spend far too much time and energy on activities that do not suit your goals.

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Portfolio Activity #21 – Focus and Planning

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#2 – Vary your approach

Most career development professionals agree: the majority of jobs are never posted publicly. Back in Module 3, you learned about networking and tapping into the hidden job market. Remember: reaching out to current and new network contacts – as well as cold calling employers – can be a great way to find out about job opportunities that have not been posted publicly. Although we spend much of this module discussing posted

jobs, keep in mind that applying to posted jobs is just one method of job searching. Be sure to include job fairs – whether virtual or in-person – as part of your job search strategy. Many larger companies and industries – including construction, technology, and healthcare – use job fairs as their primary recruitment strategy.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is the term for learning through an education program that also includes authentic workplace experiences, like an apprenticeship, internship, co-op, clinical/ field placement, or applied research project. Combined with extracurriculars like temporary or part-time jobs, clubs, and athletics, WIL is a highly valuable form of experience that you can draw upon during your job search. Whether it's the knowledge and skills you developed, ***or the people you met***, remember to include your WIL and extracurricular activities when planning out your job search activities.

#3 – Put your job search on "project status"

It is often said that job searching is a full-time job. By treating your job search as the serious project it is, you'll have more success planning, executing, and making measurable progress. Some best practices:

- Plan out and keep track of your job search activities.
- Set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-Bound)
- Schedule time for your tasks. Use a calendar.
- Keep a record of your job search activities in one place, including contact information.

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Portfolio Activity #22 – SMART Goals

Setting goals that are SMART – that is, Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound – will help to make steady progress on activities that support your job search. Here are some examples of the some SMART job search goals:

- Draft the Education section of my resume by noon today.
- Reach out to 3 connections on LinkedIn before Friday morning.
- Spend 15 minutes tomorrow evening searching for job postings online.
- Take a 5-minute stretch break for every 30 minutes I spend writing a cover letter.

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To really make your SMART goals work for you, don't hesitate: schedule your activities in a calendar!

A note on job search scams

Sadly, there are some bad actors who try to take advantage of job seekers. They do this by posing as a potential employer, then using the information you provide to take money or valuable information from you. Increasingly, we hear about job scams posted on web sites or sent to individuals by email. Job scams do exist and so it is important to be aware of what to look for so that you can protect yourself if someone tries to deceive you.

Here are some warning signs that you may be dealing with a scam:

- You are promised a lot of earnings for little to no effort.
- You are asked to pay for something – like training, materials, or a credit report – as part of the application process.
- You are asked to courier, transfer, or "wire" money to someone.
- You're offered a job without an application or interview.
- You are asked for banking information, such as credit card data.
- There is no job contact information provided or there is no valid company website.

Here are some strategies to avoid scams and protect yourself while looking for work.

- Don't click any links in an email from an unknown source.
- Never put any of the following personal information on an application form, resume, or cover letter:

  - Your Social Insurance Number
  - Your age or date of birth
  - Your marital status
  - Your driver's license number
  - Your health card number
  - Your banking or financial information

If you are contacted by a potential employer and you think it might be a scam, here are some tips:

- Get the employer's name, address, phone number, website, and email address.
- Check websites and research the company to see if it is legitimate.
- Look up the company on LinkedIn to find current employees.
- Google the company name or email address provided along with the word "scam".
- Remember, if it looks too good to be true, it just might be.

General Job Boards

We have pulled together a fantastic collection of online job boards for you to explore!

There are a number of truly powerful job search sites where you can search for active postings. These

"aggregators" or "general job boards" pull postings from multiple sources so that you can search across sites from just one board. Here are a few of the most popular:

- Canada's [Job Bank](#) typically has over 80,000 jobs posted at any one time[1]. You can simply enter a job title and location (or other keywords) and a list of results will appear. You can also use filters to narrow your results or use the Advanced Search for even more precise results.
- With over 250 million visitors a month (FOOTNOTE: Google Analytics, Unique Visitors, February 2020), [Indeed](#) provides free access to search for jobs, post resumes, and research companies.
- [WowJobs](#) lets you search over 250,000 jobs from thousands of job boards, employment and career sites in Canada[2]. Search by keyword, location, posting date, and more.

- Do you use Facebook? If so, try the [Facebook job board](#) where you can search for and filter jobs by type, industry, and location.
- Are you wondering what it's really like to work at a particular organization? Check out [Indeed's company reviews](#) to explore what people are saying about organizations across Canada and beyond.
- Charity Village is a great resource for information about Canadian charitable and non-profit organizations along with webinars, newsletters and articles.
- If you are seeking volunteer opportunities, you can make use of [Volunteer Canada,](#) [Volunteer Connection](#), and [WorkInNonProfits.ca](#).

Niche Job Boards and Sector Employers

Niche boards are job boards that focus on a particular industry or sector. There are plenty of niche job boards

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1. https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/intro/findajob
2. https://www.wowjobs.ca/

and related tools to help you explore careers (and locate employers) in specific sectors. So, be sure to include in your job search plan the resources that link to your area of study or expertise.

We've compiled this PDF list of niche job boards that you can review and download. If you can think of a niche job board that we didn't list, make sure to leave a note on the Padlet down below! Just click the '+' button to make a post and help crowdsource with other learners!

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APPLYING FOR JOBS

When you locate a job opportunity, you may be confronted with different methods for applying. Employers use different methods to collect job applications. For example, some require the completion of a standard application (often online), while others require you to submit a resume and cover letter – whether on the web site or attached to an email. Whichever method an employer uses, be sure that's the method you use. Otherwise, you could disqualify yourself from the selection process.

Be sure to check out [Module 2 of the Career and Workforce Readiness resource](#) for tips, tricks and everything you'll need to know to write a great resume and cover letter.

Best practices for applying for a job via email

A job application email is a form of business correspondence, so make a positive, professional impression.

1. Review your resume and cover letter to ensure they are correct and error-free.
2. Name each file in a way that makes it clear what the document is, usually with your name and the job applied for, such as MelReidResume.docx or AnnaCarraCoverLetter.pdf. (If the employer prescribes a certain file naming convention, be sure to follow that)
3. Unless otherwise directed, save the documents in MS Word format.
4. Enter a clear, short Subject line, usually with your name and the job applied for, such as Mel Reid application for Marketing Specialist. (Again, if the employer prescribes a certain format for the email subject, be sure to follow that.)
5. Compose a short message:

- Start with a salutation, such as Dear Kelly Green or Dear Hiring Manager.
- Provide a statement that addresses the job you're applying for and the source where you learned of the position. For example: "I'm writing to express my interest in the Marketing Specialist position listed on Indeed. My resume and cover letter are attached for your consideration."
- Give a short but impactful statement of the qualifications that make you an ideal candidate – you might consider this a highly a condensed version of your cover letter. For example: "I am a fast learner, with experience supervising others and recent completion of a graduate certificate in marketing."
- Add a statement expressing enthusiasm for further discussion about the job. For example: "I look forward to an opportunity to discuss how I might contribute to your firm's ongoing success."
- Use a complimentary close, such as "Sincerely".
- Provide your full name, email address, phone number, and link to your LinkedIn page if applicable.

6. Add the recipient email address last! This helps prevent you from sending the message in error, before it is ready. Only add the email address once you're sure your message is free of errors and you have the right documents attached. (You might even consider test-sending the email to yourself first, to be sure everything is correct.)

Applying for a job online

There are unique considerations when you apply for jobs online, like preparing in advance, working from the right file formats, and avoiding errors. Go to the article [Master Online Job Applications](#) and test your knowledge by answering the questions below.

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Are you thinking about applying for a job in the public service? Here are some resources for you.

- Government of Canada: check out "[What to Expect](#)" when applying for jobs with the federal government. For example, you'll need an account and there are terms that are unique to postings with the Government of Canada.
- Government of Ontario: learn about [the hiring process](#) used by the Ontario provincial government. For example, they offer specific tips for writing your resume and preparing for your interview.

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SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Complete this matching activity to review some of the highlights of this module.

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Congratulations! You've completed this module on Job Search Strategies and the Labour Market, the fourth of six modules designed to help you develop your career. In this module, you learned about the labour market, sectors, and industries. You explored useful web sites: the NAICS, the NOC, and the Job Bank. You've learned about regulated occupations and you've developed specific skills to support your job search efforts, including where to look for jobs, best practices for applying, and managing your job search. Along the way, we've helped you collect some valuable information and resources that you can include in your own portfolio so that you can take them forward in your career development efforts.

The next module in this series is all about Interview Skills: you'll learn about the various types of interviews and their formats, along with plenty of practical strategies to prepare and perform in interviews with confidence.

INTERVIEW SKILLS

Welcome to Interview Skills, the fifth of six modules designed to help you develop your career. In this module, you will learn about the various types of interviews and their formats, along with plenty of practical strategies to prepare and perform in interviews with confidence. Plus, you'll walk away with some valuable resources to add to your personalized Career Development Portfolio – resources you can use for your own career development going forward.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Employ practical strategies to prepare for interviews;
- Anticipate and prepare well-crafted responses to interview questions;
- Apply strategies to "interview" potential employers;
- Increase your confidence and make a positive impression; and
- Prepare references for contact after an interview.

Activities (overview)

By the end of the module, you will have completed the following portfolio activities:

- Identify some top tips for interviewing
- Prepare responses to some common interview questions, including Tell me about yourself, and What are your weaknesses?
- Practice conducting employer- and job-research
- Practice using the STAR framework for answering behavioural interview questions
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer
- Identify your communication style and how it can affect your interview performance
- Practice reflecting on your interview performance.

Remember to have your portfolio folder downloaded and ready so that you have a place to collect all your work! You can download a pre-crafted, empty portfolio folder that has already been organized by clicking this link.

Knowledge Check

Before we get started, try your hand at some multiple choice questions and test your knowledge!

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AN OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWS

In almost every circumstance, interviews form a critical part of the job search process. An interview is a conversation between 2 or more people for the purposes of collecting and assessing information. A job interview involves a job applicant and an employer representative and the purpose is to decide whether to enter into an employment agreement: the employer seeks to decide whether the applicant is the best candidate for hire, while the candidate seeks to decide whether the opportunity and workplace are a good fit for their career goals. If there is a match, the employer and candidate can enter into negotiation of a job offer.

Employers ask interview questions to confirm 3 things:

- If you have the abilities and skills to do the job;
- If you will fit well with the team and the organization; and
- If you have enthusiasm and a good work ethic

Interviews can be structured or unstructured; informal or formal; and held in-person, by phone, or virtually. Furthermore, there are different interview types and formats. They can differ from one industry to the next, and from one occupation to the next. Despite this variability, there are standards and practices that can be of benefit to anyone engaging in an interview. These are the strategies you'll learn about in this module.

It can be difficult for an employer to ascertain which job candidate will be the best hire simply by reviewing a resume and cover letter. For this reason, inviting candidates in for interviews can help with decision-making.

The traditional job cycle goes something like this: an employer is in need of someone to perform certain work. Using various methods – such as by posting job ads, engaging recruiters, or asking current employees for referrals – they look for candidates to take on the job. If the employer has numerous candidates to choose from, they apply specific decision criteria to the applications received (usually in the form of applications, resumes,

and cover letters) to narrow the candidate pool. From there, the employer can invite a more manageable number of candidates to participate in interviews.

While sometimes one round of interviews can suffice, many employers engage in multiple rounds of interviews before deciding whether to extend a job offer to a candidate. For example, candidates may be asked to take part in a telephone interview with a recruiter, and, if they screen in, only then might they be invited to interview with someone with the authority to hire them. This approach to interviewing allows both candidates and the employer to keep costs low, as phone-screening interviews require less time and involvement from fewer people.

Watch the following 9 minute video from Indeed on what to expect from an interview, along with some top tips for interviewing:

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> https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=386#h5p-39

Structure and Format

While some employers take an unstructured, informal approach to interviews, most employers use more structured, formal methods: doing so allows them to accomplish multiple goals, including to ensure that all questions they ask relate directly to the job at hand and that each candidate is evaluated in the same way.

The structure of an interview will vary somewhat based on the type of interview, which we'll review soon, but most high level interviews will proceed through the following steps:

Before the interview

- Employer and candidate each make their respective pre-interview preparations.

At the interview

- Greetings and introductions. The interview may give a brief summary of the position and of the planned selection process.
- Interviewer asks the candidate a series of questions and the candidates gives responses
- Candidate asks 1-3 prepared questions and the interviewer gives responses
- Thanks, indication of next steps, and conclusion of interview.

After the interview

- Employer and candidate each conduct their post-interview activities.

Not all interviews are the same. Interviews can vary not only by their delivery format, but also by their structure and the types of questions asked. Knowing what type of interview to expect will help you determine how to best prepare. Let's look at the various types of job interview. No matter which format is used, treat each interview like you would a formal, face-to-face business meeting: be well-prepared, dress appropriately, and conduct yourself with professionalism.

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Types of Questions

The questions asked by the employer during an interview can be of different types. Your interview may be composed of one type of interview question but, more often, interviewers will use a variety of question types in order to gather the information they need from candidates. Let's look at some of the more common types of interview questions you're likely to deal with.

Behavioural questions

A behavioural question asks the candidate to recount a real-life occasion where they demonstrated certain knowledge, skills, or attitudes the employer is looking for. The candidate is asked to recall a specific experience and how they handled it. **The question usually starts with the phrase "Tell me about a time...".** Employers use behavioural interviews because if a candidate can provide examples where they've already demonstrated certain skills, this gives greater reassurance to the employer that the candidate actually possesses the skill – they aren't just saying so.

Situational and Case questions

In a situational question, the interviewer presents a hypothetical circumstance and asks the candidate how they would handle it. The candidate answers questions about the situation and provides recommendations for actions to take and/or factors to consider. For example, to evaluate a candidate's skill at prioritizing, **the candidate might be asked the following: "Let's say you've been assigned multiple tasks by different managers in your department. How would you go about prioritizing your tasks?"** This kind of question provides insight into the candidate's thinking process, their work values, and critical thinking skills. When responding to a situational interview question, don't just say WHAT you would do – Explain WHY you would take that action!

A Case interview question presents a candidate with a case study, an example of an issue at work that would require some type of resolution or action. **Here's an example of a case question: "Read this information about our client, then present your suggested solution to the problem."** Explain your rationale and give evidence supporting your suggested course of action.

Technical Questions and Work samples

To determine whether a candidate has the technical knowledge or skills required to succeed in the specific job, an interviewer may pose Technical questions, and/or require the completion of Work samples. **An example of a Technical interview question might be as follows: "Explain the basic principles of aerodynamics and how you would use that knowledge to build a paper plane".** A Work sample is a task assigned to the candidate that replicates events or scenarios they might see on the job; the candidate completes the tasks assigned and the employer evaluates the extent to which the candidate has the skills or aptitude for the work.

When you are invited to an interview, find out what type of interview to expect. For instance, will you be expected to write a test, give a presentation, or even prepare something in advance? An interview can take any of these formats or a combination of them. Knowing what to expect will let you be better prepared.

General Interview Questions

Plenty of interview questions do not fall under the categories just described. Instead, interview questions can often feel more like a conversation, which can be good for building rapport and making a connection with candidates. Just remember that a job interview is still a formal business event and so even when you are asked a question that seems casual, the interviewer is watching how you respond to determine your fit for the target job.

Let's practice researching a company, using just its web site. Think of an organization you'd like to work for, or use Canadian Tire as your example. Open a new internet browser tab, and find the company web site. Try using a search engine, like Google.ca.

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION

As you've seen, succeeding in an interview requires a great deal of preparation. In fact, you should expect to spend more time preparing for an interview than you will participating in the interview itself, including following up afterward. Let's get into some proven strategies to be a top notch interview candidate.

Research the Employer

An interview presents a great opportunity to show your prospective employer that you're excited to work for them and that you're giving due consideration to how well the organization aligns with you and your career development goals. So, spend some time learning about the company: what does it do? What are its mission, goals, and values? You can find great information about your target employer in a number of places:

- The job posting
- The company web site
- LinkedIn (look for its company page. Also, why not reach out to current and former employees and request an informational interview? Learn about informational interviews in Module 3 of this series, Networking and LinkedIn)

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Portfolio Activity #23 – Research the Company

Let's practice researching a company using just its web site. Think of an organization you'd like to work for, or use Canadian Tire as your example. Open a new internet browser tab and

find the company web site. Try using a search engine, like Google.ca.

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Research the Job

Researching the job you are interviewing for is the most important step you will take to prepare for the interview. This is because employers tailor interviews to determine how good a fit the candidate is for the job in question. If you have a good idea what the job requires, you'll be well positioned to prepare effectively for your interview.

So, just as you've spent time learning about the company, learn about the job by looking closely at the job posting or by reading the job description if one is available. You will get valuable clues about what is most important to the employer in a job candidate.

Let's say you have applied to the job posting below, and have been called for an interview:

Job: Project Manager, Construction

Employer: Anytown Foundry & Machine

Location: Anytown, ON

Terms of employment: Permanent, Full time, Day

Languages: English

Education: Undergraduate degree or equivalent experience

Experience: Experience an asset

Specific Skills:

- Select trade subcontractors and co-ordinate their activities

- Plan and manage budgets
- Plan and prepare construction schedules and milestones
- Implement policies and procedures for quality control
- Prepare reports
- Plan, organize, direct, control and evaluate daily operations

Computer Applications: MS Excel; MS Word; AutoCAD; MS Office; MS Outlook; MS Project
Additional Skills:

- Read blueprint, schemas, and drawings
- Hire and supervise activities of subcontractors

Work Setting: Industrial construction
Security and Safety: Bondable; Drug test; Criminal record check
Travel Information: Valid driver's license

Work Conditions:

- Fast-paced environment
- Work under pressure
- Attention to detail
- Tight deadlines

Personal Suitability:

- Effective interpersonal skills
- Flexibility
- Team player
- Excellent oral communication, excellent written communication
- Organized

Answer the following questions based solely on information from the job posting.

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"What Are Your Weaknesses?"

Imagine walking into an interview where you already know all the questions that will be asked and you are poised to provide polished, impressive answers to the interviewers. This is the value of knowing both the most common interview questions and the questions you are most likely to be asked for the specific job for which you're interviewing.

Portfolio Activity #24 – Brainstorming Weaknesses

Imagine walking into an interview where you already know all the questions that will be asked, and you are poised to provide polished, impressive answers to the interviewers. This is the value of knowing both the most common interview questions and the questions you are most likely to be asked for the specific job for which you're interviewing.

Watch this 6 minute video by Linda Raynier on how to answer the interview question "what are your weaknesses?"

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In completing the portfolio activity above, you may have noticed that the purpose of an interview question may not always be obvious and that it is helpful to know why the interview is asking a question and what information they are looking for from you. Download this PDF resource that addresses common interview questions, why the interviewer is asking the question, and the information they're looking for. If you've completed all the prior modules in this course, you'll be familiar with what the STAR framework is and how you can make it work for you; if you're just joining us for this module, we'll dig into the STAR framework a little later on!

"Tell Me About Yourself"

"Tell me about yourself" is one of the most common questions you will be asked as an interviewee and it is often asked early on. So, knowing how to structure your answer will make a great positive impression from the start. Structure your answer using a Present-Past-Future format:

- Present: briefly explain where you are now in terms of your career, whether in terms of training, work, or both. Explain what you do and recount a positive accomplishment.
- Past: indicate how you got where you are, for example via education and/or past experiences.
- Future: indicate what you're looking to do next and show how the position you're applying for aligns with how you envision your future

Here's an example:

Question:

Why don't you tell us a little about yourself and why you're here today?

Answer:

Sure. My name is Janice and for the past year, I've been working at a co-op placement at Infosplit, doing database maintenance. I also have some background in data analysis and I'm nearing completion of a computer science degree.

I've always been good with numbers and interested in big data. For example, during my placement at Infosplit, I made some recommendations to improve the quality of data inputs. This allowed for more robust analytics by the reporting department.

Moving forward, I hope to expand my experience, ideally in the not-for-profit sector. I'm particularly interested in the important work being done by children's charities, which is why this opportunity is so appealing to me.

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Portfolio Activity #25 – Tell me about yourself

Now that you know how to answer the interview question "Tell me about yourself", take a few moments to practice how you might answer that question if you were interviewing for your next target job. You'll get to practice forming responses in past, present, and future tenses.

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Determine Likely Questions

One of the most valuable things a job posting can do is provide clues as to what the specific questions will be in the interview. As noted at the start of this module, employers conduct interviews to confirm 3 things:

1. If you have the abilities and skills to do the job;
2. If you will fit well with the team and the organization; and
3. If you have enthusiasm and a good work ethic.

By looking closely at a job posting, you can often identify what the employer is looking for (and thus, what the employer is likely to ask during an interview). Let's say you have applied to the job posting below and have been called for an interview.

XYZ Canada

Oshawa, ON

Full-time · Entry level

We're XYZ, a three-time Best Places to Work award winner in Insurance. We enable client success through the expertise of over 400 employees based in Canada (and more than 3,000 employees globally), investments in innovative technologies, and ensuring quality relationships with highly-rated insurers, vendors, and financial institutions.

We're growing our Administrator team. We are looking for an Insurance Coordinator to interact with clients on a day-to-day basis while managing a variety of administrative tasks. This role will serve an essential function in servicing, guiding, and resolving our clients' billing issues .

What You'll Do

- Coordinate and process insurance claims and communicate with claims adjusters
- Prepare pre-renewal client information packages, assist clients with any questions
- Reporting of claims where required
- Assist front line service and sales staff with various service requests as needed
- Other duties as assigned

With this role, you will open the door to an exciting career growth opportunity with XYZ and be a valued member and key partner in ensuring client satisfaction. XYZ will cover additional training on our specific software and insurance requirements so you can succeed in this role.

What You Bring

- Customer service and/or administrative experience in ensuring client-focused services – preferably in finance or insurance
- Strong ability to work collaboratively in a remote/hybrid environment
- Strong time management and organizational skills; quick learner
- Ability to consistently meet deadlines independently and comfort with fast-paced, changing environments
- Knowledge of payment options, insurance coverage, and risk management best practices is an asset
- Experience with industry software is an asset
- Strong computer and data maintenance skills with variety of applications and ability to learn proprietary systems and proficiency in Microsoft Office

Based solely on information from the job posting, it's likely that you'll be able to predict some of the questions of topics that will be addressed during the interview. Below you'll see a number of quotes from the above posting. Before clicking them open to see what the likely question or topic is, see if you can guess them yourself.

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Once you have determined the questions that will most likely be asked, you'll be able to prepare your answers to interview questions in advance! That way, when the time comes for the interview:

1. You're more likely to provide the information the interviewer is looking for in a way that has the strongest impact;
2. You won't be stuck trying to think of answers on the spot;
3. You'll feel more confident; and
4. You'll appear more confident.

Using the STAR framework

The STAR framework is a concept that is explained in Module 1 under the "Articulating Your Skills" heading. This section will help contextualize ways of using the STAR framework to your advantage while interviewing. You might find it useful to complete the associated activity linked to above, as it will ask you to craft accomplishment statements for your portfolio that you can use in your resume.

The STAR framework is the method to use when responding to behavioural interview questions where the interviewer asks you to recount an occasion where you faced a certain situation and had to take some action (for example: "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a conflict").

Once you have determined what questions you are likely to be asked, prepare scenarios from your experiences – from work, education, placements, volunteering, etc. – where you demonstrated the skills and knowledge required for the target job. Instead of merely telling the interviewer you have the skills they seek, your answers to these questions give proof of those skills.

S-T-A-R stands for Situation, Task (or Tactics), Action, and Result: when responding to behavioural interview questions, be sure to include all of those elements.

Situation: briefly describe the specific situation you were in (What was the context? Who was involved? What problem needed to be solved? etc.).

Task/Tactics: what was your responsibility in the situation? Explain your thought process and the options considered.

Action: describe the course of action you took, step by step. Explain your rationale for taking the action you did.

Result: what was the positive outcome generated by your action? (E.g., What was accomplished, improved, or learned?)

Here's an example of the STAR framework in action, being applied to answer the following interview question: "Sometimes customers can be angry. Give an example of how you have handled this in the past?"

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=477#h5p-58

If you want some additional information on the STAR framework, you can read this article by Alison Doyle which details examples of the framework being used to answer interview questions.

Now that you're familiar with STAR Framework, try ordering the phrases found below to formulate a STAR response to the following interview question:

"Tell me about a time when you had to be strategic in order to meet all of your priorities."

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=477#h5p-59

Portfolio Activity #26 – STAR Framework (redux)

Choose one of the following behavioural interview questions. In the document building tool below, practice your answer using the STAR framework. Remember, the examples you use can come not just from prior work experiences, but also projects you completed at work, school, or home.

1. Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
2. We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently.
3. Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?
4. Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?
5. Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=477#h5p-63

Questions For the Employer

You learned early in this module that a typical interview consists not only of questions by the employer for the candidate, but a chance for the candidate to ask questions of the employer. Don't miss this opportunity! Asking questions shows that you are engaged in the conversation, interested in the company and the job, and that you are enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and prepared. This is another chance for you to demonstrate your understanding of the company and the position, restate your skills and why you would be a great hire, and show your interest and passion for the work you hope to do with the organization. So, be prepared to ask 2-3 questions during your interview. Here are some ideas:

If the interviewer has not already described what to expect for next steps in the selection process, this is a good time to ask. For example, you might ask "What are the next steps in the interview process?" or "Do you have an ideal start date in mind?" Remember, this is not the time for your questions about salary, benefits, or vacation time. Save those questions for when a job offer is extended. For now, focus on showing that you are the right person for the job.

You can take this a step further by framing your research as questions. You might ask about something the company is currently involved with, such as an upcoming project, event, or what is relevant for professionals in the field right now. Here's an example: "I noticed that you have recently partnered with OPIRG to deliver some workshops to community groups. Since I would be involved with outreach, would I be assisting with this project, and, if so, in what ways?"

So, in short, be prepared to ask 2-3 questions during your interview. Here are some ideas:

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=477#h5p-60

Portfolio Activity #27 – Questions for the employer

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INTERVIEW SENSITIVITY

In this section, we'll talk about 3 areas of potential concern for some interviewees.

The Employment Standards Act covers many people working in Ontario. This law addresses many specifics around work, such as work hours, pay, leaves from work, holidays, vacation, and termination. To see if you are covered under this Act and to learn more, check out Your guide to the Employment Standards Act.

On Disclosure

Disclosure refers to letting a potential or current employer know some sensitive information about you, such as self-identification with an equity seeking group (e.g., BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIAA, person with a disability, etc.). Decisions about disclosure are very personal and can be an area of concern when you are engaging in career development activities like interviewing. Many people are unsure what to disclose, when to disclose it, or whether to disclose anything at all.

Related to this is the notion of accommodation: "A workplace accommodation is where an employer makes adjustments to the workplace for a person or group of people with unique requirements as a result of a characteristic protected under human rights law." [1]

The requirement for Canadian workplaces to offer accommodation applies not just to employees who have already been hired, but to candidates during the recruitment and selection process as well. For some great information and considerations for disclosure and accommodation, check out this Disclosure & Accommodation tip sheet from Queen's University.

On Salary

Be prepared in case your interviewer asks about your salary expectations. Research the market rate for similar work in the area. Keep in mind that salary is affected by your skill level and qualifications, the local cost of living, labour market demand, as well as the mix of total compensation offered by the employer, such as through employee benefits.

You can consult Canada's Job Bank for wage information on your target occupation and your local labour market so that you can be prepared and have a pay range in mind: consider what your lowest acceptable range of pay would be, as well as specific examples of your accomplishments in case you are in a position to negotiate a higher wage. Additionally, websites like Glassdoor will allow you to validate your pay range.

On Illegal Questions

Employers cannot ask a candidate questions that could reveal information about the candidate's race, religion, gender, marital status, politics, health, or other protected characteristics. Even if such questions are sometimes asked accidentally, they can contribute to discrimination and therefore should not be raised as part of a job interview.

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1. https://www.sterlingbackcheck.ca/blog/2017/12/what-are-workplace-accommodations/

Do you know that an employer legally can and cannot ask you in an interview? Let's find out

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=418#h5p-94

If you'd like to learn more, you can check out the [Steps to Justice resource](#) we used to craft the quiz above.

There are a number of options available if you are asked an illegal interview question:

- You can answer the question if you are comfortable doing do.
  E.g. "Yes, I do have a driver's license."
- You can explain your reason for not answering the question.
  E.g. "l never talk politics at work because I know it's a sensitive topic."
- You can ask why the question is being asked.
  E.g. "l'm not quite sure I understand. Could you please explain how the issue is relevant to the position?"
- You can refuse to answer the question.
  E.g. "That question makes me uncomfortable. I'd prefer to move on to the next question."

Every job searcher is unique: some will have to contend with aspects of the interview process that others will not, such as topics related to personal information. As always, the best way to have a positive interview experience is to be prepared.

Media Attributions

- two men talking photo by LinkedIn Sales Solutions via Unslpash

FINISHING TOUCHES

You've already put a lot of work to getting to this point, so now let's look at some highly strategies for before the interview. This will help you keep that positive momentum.

Confirming References

A reference is a person who can vouch for your skills, knowledge and experience as they relate to to the jobs you apply for. Employers often check applicant references in order to verify statements you made in your resume or interview. Speaking with people who are familiar with your work can provide reassurance to the employer about your past responsibilities, work ethic, professional behaviour, skills and dependability.

There are plenty of people you can ask to be a job reference for you. What's most important is that your references are willing and able to say positive things about you and your work. Just remember to always get permission before listing anyone as a reference. Call and ask the person if they would be comfortable speaking positively about you as a reference, adding "I completely understand if you have a policy against giving references" (this gives the person a way to politely decline if they are unsure).

Here are some people you might consider asking:

- a past or current supervisor
- a trusted coworker
- a former professor, lab instructor, advisor, or coach
- someone you've volunteered for (or with)
- a former client
- a former classmate
- a peer who served on a team with you

Prepare your list of 3-4 references in advance and be prepared to provide them upon request, such as during an interview. Have both a hard and a soft copy prepared. This should be in the form of a one-page document with your name and contact details at the top, consistent with your resume and cover letter. Then, under the heading References, list each reference along with the following information: name, job title, company, phone, email, and relationship. Here is an example of a reference sheet:

Moira Scott

123 Fakestreet, Markham, Ontario, L3R6U9

(705) 555-7700

mscott8888@email.com

References

Nicole Chen

Director of Engineering

Moonbeam Inc.

(705) 555-7777

nchen@email.com

Nicole was my direct manager from 2016 to 2018 when I worked as a software developer for Moonbeam Inc.

Kwame Nelson

Front-End Software Engineer

Softwerks Co.

(705) 555-0000

knelson@email.com

Kwame is an engineer I collaborated with daily in my recent work placement at Softwerks Co.

Dr. Cooper Moore

Professor of Computer Science

Provincial University

(705) 555-7770

cmoore@email.edu

Cooper was my professor in 3 classes and my faculty advisor for my computer science degree.

If you have been asked for your references or called for an interview, be sure to let your references know. This allows them to prepare to be contacted and prevents them from being caught off guard. This is also a good time to thank them once again for agreeing to act as a reference and to let them know about the job you've applied for. Giving your references a heads-up ensures they can be well-prepared to help you by providing a reference that supports your candidacy for the target job.

Displaying Confidence

Even after considerable planning and preparation, many people get nervous at the prospect of engaging in a job interview. This is natural! To start with, remember that interviews are a 2-way street: not only is the employer seeking to learn if you are a fit for them, but you are also seeking to learn if the employer and job will be a fit for you!

If your interview is in person and there are no social distancing measures currently being enforced, offer a firm handshake to each person taking part in the interview. Remember to smile, make eye contact, and to use the person's name when greeting. Check out this video on the Dos and Don'ts of interview handshakes.

Don't be put off if you offer a handshake and it is declined. For some cultures, shaking hands is not appropriate. If you wish to politely decline a handshake yourself, try simply putting your hand to your chest with a smile.

The best way to establish confidence in your interviewing ability is practice! Don't just read and write about interviewing skills – find a way to actually practice going through the interview process. The act of rehearsing "out loud" will help reveal considerations you may not have thought about. Here are some ideas:

1. Find a friend to help you: They can play the part of an interviewer and conduct a mock interview with you. They might also be able to give you some advice on the way you present yourself and whether your answers are clear and compelling. "A mock interview helps you learn how to answer difficult questions, develop interview strategies, improve your communication skills, and reduce your stress before an actual job interview."[1]
2. Block off some time before and after your interview to gather your thoughts.
3. Before your interview, take a few moments to think about what calms you and gets you in a confident, peaceful mind space. This might be a brief meditation, a short walk outside, or a quick pep talk from a friend.
4. Try the Power Posing hack! Check out this TED Talk video about body language and power posing for confidence.
5. Try the STOP mindfulness exercise:

- S = Stop what you're doing.
- T = Take a few deep breaths to bring yourself fully into the present moment.

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1. https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-use-mock-interviews-to-practice-interviewing-2061626#:~:text=A%20mock%20interview%20helps%20you,a%20formal%20list%20of%20questions

- O = Observe what's going on with your body, feelings, and thoughts. What physical sensations are you experiencing? What assumptions are you making?
- P = Proceed with your activities, making an intentional choice to incorporate what you just learned.

When answering interview questions, do not feel compelled to rush quickly into your answer. It's okay to take time to think before responding. If needed, you can also ask the interviewer to repeat a question or to skip the question temporarily and return to it later in the interview.

Dress for Success

Do not wait for the day of the interview to think about your appearance. Like it or not, the way we present ourselves visually forms impressions in the mind of an interviewer. Your appearance for an interview should be designed to make a positive impression while keeping the focus on you. In other words, you do not want anything distracting from your performance. You want your professional look to support your conversations, not overpower or distract from them.

The first thing to think about is your clothing. What you wear depends on the workplace you're looking to join: dress for the work environment (is it Business Formal, Business Casual, or Casual?). Generally, there are 3 Categories of Business Dress:

Business Formal

- usually a matched suit (skirt suit or pantsuit)
- collared shirt or blouse, white or plain in colour
- darker colours, which tend to look more formal

Business Casual

- Dress pants or skirt
- Dress shirt
- Optional: jacket or sweater

Casual

• Casual pants and skirts
• Shirts with or without a collar, T-shirts without logos

MORE TIPS:

◦ If possible, find out the dress code of your target workplace. Then, take it one level up for the interview. In other words, err on the side of more formal: dress 20% better at an interview than you would on the job itself.

◦ Dress in clothes that make you feel good: you will project yourself more confidently.

◦ Try on your outfit: does it fit? Is it clean, in good repair, and wrinkle free?

◦ Are your shoes clean and polished?

◦ Practice good hygiene (clean body, hair, teeth, good breath). Are your hair and fingernails clean and well groomed?

◦ Don't wear fragrances (perfume/cologne) as others may be sensitive.

◦ Keep accessories (hair, make-up, jewelry, etc.) to a minimum.

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- Lightbulb via CareerSpace
- person standing near the stairs by Hunters Race via Unsplash
- man in white polo shirt and black pants standing beside white wall during daytime by Fortune Vieyra via Unsplash
- A group of friends at a coffee shop by Brooke Cagle via Unsplash

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Before the Interview

You've been invited to an interview – congratulations! You've already put a lot of work to getting to this point, so now let's look at some powerful strategies for before the interview. This will help you keep that positive momentum.

Technology

- Be sure you are familiar with the platform to be used, e.g., Zoom, Teams, Skype.
- Make sure you have a strong internet connection and all your equipment is working, e.g. webcam, microphone.
- Position your camera to be angled slightly down at your eyes for optimal visuals.
- Turn off or mute your devices and ensure you will not have interruptions during the interview, such as a phone ringing.
- A noise-cancelling headset can help keep distractions to a minimum.
- Prepare to give your undivided attention. Close any programs or browser windows you won't need.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

Background

- Arrange a quiet, tidy, and uncluttered area with minimal distractions.
- Ensure your surroundings and background are clean and professional. Consider a virtual background (an option available in many platforms).
- Have a comfortable chair that looks clean (i.e., not torn up by your pet's nails, etc.).
- Before the call, let others in your home know you'll be in a meeting so they don't walk in on the call.

Desk Space

- Have a copy of your resume, the job description, any other important notes and

documents, and a pen nearby.

- Allow enough table space to lay out your papers so you won't have to shuffle through them.
- Have a glass of water at the ready for the big day.

Attire

- Dress as professionally as you would for an in-person interview. (Yes, that includes wearing pants. And no pajama bottoms!)

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=429#h5p-92

Record yourself doing a practice interview! You can use the video camera on your smartphone, or record yourself in a virtual meeting environment using a platform like Zoom. You can play the role of both interviewer and candidate, but it can be very helpful to recruit someone else to act as the interviewer. Plus, you can get their feedback on your interview performance. After you finish recording, go back and review your performance. How did you do? You can download this example 'practice sheet' and use it to evaluate your performance, noting areas where you do well and areas for potential improvement. It can be helpful to get another person to watch the recording too so they can offer you some constructive feedback. Be sure to evaluate not only how well you responded to each interview question, but how you conducted yourself overall during the "interview". Practice makes perfect!

During the Interview

You've researched the employer and the job, and you've practiced answering a variety of interview questions. You've selected your interview outfit and you've taken steps to ensure you are confidently prepared for your interview. Now let's look at some more strategies to make a great first impression at the interview itself.

Set the right tone before the interview starts:

1. Arrive or connect virtually a few minutes early.
2. Have copies of your resume at hand.
3. Have your references information ready to provide.

Make a strong first impression in the first few minutes:

1. Greet the interviewer(s) with confidence and enthusiasm.
2. Smile.
3. Sit up straight and make eye contact.

Remember to be aware of your non-verbal communication – your body language.

Click each of the non-verbal behaviours to see what it may be communicating to a potential employer.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=429#h5p-93

*The following activity contains free to use images from both Unsplash and Pixabay, they can be found at the following links:

1. man in red and gray v neck shirt wearing black sunglasses

2. [girl covering her face with both hands](#)
3. [man wearing black and white checkered sport shirt](#)
4. [photo by MabelAmber](#)
5. [photo by Engin_Akyurt](#)
6. [boy in green jacket sits on folding padded chair near door inside room](#)

Clearly, your body language can send powerful messages. So too can your Communication Style. Let's look at 4 basic Communication styles.

Passive

- May show poor eye contact and/or body posture
- Does not express their needs or wants
- Avoids saying "no"
- Can lead to misunderstanding

Aggressive

- May use a loud, demanding voice
- Often makes intense eye contact
- May fail to listen
- May blame, criticize, or attack others

Passive-Aggressive

- Seems passive, but feels powerless inside
- Becomes resentful and acts out in subtle, indirect ways
- Has difficulty voicing their needs
- May deny when there is a problem

Assertive

- Open communicator, yet not overbearing
- Can express own needs, desires, ideas, feelings

- Expresses self in a way that is also considerate of others
- Can say no and use "I" statements well (I think, I feel, I want)

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=429#h5p-97

Phone interviews will have their own etiquette (as we've outlined already). If you are interviewing by phone, try to work in the following:

- If the interviewer is calling you, identify yourself when you answer: "Hello, Jamie Jobseeker speaking".
- If you are calling the interviewer: "Hello, this is Jamie Jobseeker calling for Ms. Hiring Manager". (Or, if they identify themselves when they answer, "Good afternoon Ms. Hiring. This is Jamie Jobseeker calling for our 1 p.m. phone interview.")
- At the end of the call say, "Thank you for your time today. I appreciate it and I look forward to hearing from you".

After the Interview

Shortly after the interview is the perfect time to reflect on the experience. This means thinking about not just what went well, but also what you can improve on for next time. You can download this PDF featuring a list of questions that you can use to prompt this reflection.

You can use this Job Search Tracker spreadsheet from The Muse to keep track of companies you research, jobs you apply to, interviews you attend, and steps you take to follow up!

Last but not least, you'll want to send a 'thank you' message. Yes, you thanked your interviewers at the end of the interview. But it is common practice to also offer a more formal message of thanks to interviewers within 2 business days of your meeting. Today this is commonly done via email. Here are some tips for writing a post-interview Thank You message, along with an example:

Emails are often informal, but this is a business communication and should be structured as a business email. Be sure to follow these guidelines (and example):

1. Type the e-mail address correctly and double-check before hitting Send!
2. Use an action-specific subject line.
3. Use normal sentence capitalization
4. Keep your sentences short
5. Use an appropriate greeting
6. Express gratitude and be specific.
7. Reaffirm your interest in the opportunity.
8. Mention something specific about the interview to jog the reader's memory and connect this message to your interview.
9. Express interest in next steps.
10. Invite contact.
11. Sign off with a complimentary close
12. Include a signature.
13. Edit and spell check before sending!

To J jjjacobson@greatcompany.net ✕ Bcc

Cc

Thank you for interview this morning

Hello, Ms. Jacobson.

Thank you again for your time in interviewing me for the position of technical project manager with GreatCompany. I enjoyed our conversation, and it was a pleasure to learn more about the technical project manager position and the team. It sounds like an exciting opportunity, and I am eager to contribute my skills and experience, particularly in the projects you described for supporting the expansion of virtually service delivery at GreatCompany.

I look forward to further discussing this opportunity with you, and hearing about the next steps in the interview process. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information about my fit for this role.

Sincerely,

Hassan Majumder

Calibri 11 B I U ...

Send | ⌄   Discard   Draft saved at 4:29 PM

Are salary negotiations something you need to consider? Sometimes you'll be asked this in the interview, but you could also be asked to share your salary expectations before or after the interview. The timing depends on the company. CERIC has some articles to review to help you navigate questions and discussions around compensation.

1. man in red and gray v neck shirt wearing black sunglasses
2. girl covering her face with both hands
3. man wearing black and white checkered sport shirt
4. photo by MabelAmber
5. photo by Engin_Akyurt
6. boy in green jacket sits on folding padded chair near door inside room

Media Attributions

- Lightbulb via CareerSpace
- Thank You email example

SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Congratulations! You've completed this module on Interview Skills! In this module, you learned about the various types of interviews along with plenty of practical strategies to prepare for and participate in interviews with confidence and success. Along the way, we've helped you collect some valuable information and resources that you can include in your own portfolio so that you can take them forward in your career development efforts.

The next and final module in this series is all about Workplace Communications and Professionalism. You'll learn about etiquette and professional conduct for the workplace, the importance of things like a positive attitude and emotional intelligence for career success, some concrete strategies to improve your workplace communication skills, and practical tips for engaging in difficult conversations at work.

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION AND PROFESSIONALISM

Welcome to Workplace Communications and Professionalism, the final module in our six-module series to help you develop your career. In this module, you will learn about workplace professionalism and etiquette, the importance of things like a positive attitude and emotional intelligence for career success, some concrete strategies to improve your workplace communication skills, and practical tips for engaging in difficult conversations at work. Plus, you'll walk away with plenty of valuable resources to add to your personalized Career Development Portfolio – resources you can use for your own career development going forward.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify expectations for appropriate workplace conduct;
- Identify the importance of attitude for career success;
- Define workplace culture;
- Compare verbal and non-verbal communication;

- Apply best practices for written workplace communications, including emails;
- Adapt conduct to account for workplace etiquette, including when using digital collaboration tools;
- Define emotional intelligence;
- Explain the importance of cross-cultural workplace communication; and
- Apply strategies to navigate difficult workplace conversations with success.

Activities (overview)

By the end of the module, you will have completed the activities on the following:

- Competence: dealing with deadlines, making mistakes, and solving problems
- Communication skills
- Conduct and attitude
- Workplace culture
- Staying on topic
- Emotional Intelligence
- Intrinsic motivation
- Empathy
- Having a difficult conversation with your boss

Remember to have your portfolio folder downloaded and ready so that you have a place to collect all your work! You can download a pre-crafted, empty portfolio folder that has already been organized by clicking this link.

Media Attributions

- Module 6 via CareerSpace
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PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Long before Day one on the job, employers are assessing your ability to communicate effectively and to conduct yourself professionally in the workplace. This is why it's so important to consider communications and professionalism during the job search phase before you begin work officially. Workplaces have expectations around employee competence, communication skills, conduct (including attitude!), and fit with the organizational culture.

We begin this module by introducing and then reflecting upon the 4 C's of professional expectations: Competence, Conduct, Culture, and Communication. Let's look at what each of these terms mean for you!

Competence

This refers to doing your job well. In addition to carrying out your duties, you have additional expectations as an employee, such as:

- Managing your time and meeting deadlines;
- Following up when you've completed an assigned task;
- Advising people who may be affected if you miss a deadline;
- Refraining from minimizing your errors
  - This means that instead of saying "My bad", you take responsibility for your part;
- Bringing your supervisor not just problems, but also potential solutions;
- Being resourceful – ready to answer the question "What have you tried/considered so far?"; and
- Asking for feedback so you can improve.

📁

Portfolio Reflection #28 – Reflections on Competency

📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=549#h5p-76

Conduct and Attitude

Professional conduct and a positive attitude are expectations of most workplaces:

- Be considerate and polite, even when dealing with someone difficult
- Be friendly but not overly familiar (one should limit socializing to ensure the work gets done)
- Demonstrate an attitude that is committed, reliable, pleasant, positive, and helpful. For example, if you're not busy, ask your supervisor if there's something you could be working on.

📁

Portfolio Reflection #29 – Conduct and Attitude

🖼️ *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=549#h5p-78

Workplace Culture

Adapting to the workplace culture is a sign that you can be positive contributor to the team and to organizational goals, rather than a potential source of conflict and friction. This includes displaying a number of positive behaviours, such as:

- Being punctual
- Showing up reliably and making proactive contact if, for example, you are sick
- Adhering to any dress codes
- Following protocols, for example when and how often to check in with your supervisor
- Making appropriate use of organizational resources

📁

Portfolio Reflection #30 – Workplace Culture

Consider the following scenario:

It's Sunday evening, you've developed a sore throat, and you are tired. You are scheduled to work at 9AM Monday morning. You decide to see how you feel in the morning before deciding whether to take a sick day. You wake up Monday morning and your throat pain is worse. You look at the clock and realize that it's 10AM and you've slept through your alarm. You pick up the phone and see there is a voice mail message from your supervisor waiting for you.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=549#h5p-79

Communication Skills

Communication skills are important whether they are used with supervisors, co-workers, or clients. In most workplaces, everyone is expected to show the following behaviours when it comes to how we communicate:

- Learning people's names
- Introducing yourself to people you don't know
- Politeness and respect toward others
- Respecting confidentiality
- Listening actively: seek first to understand, ask for clarification, and paraphrase what you hear
- Handling any disagreements privately and with tact

Your workplace may distinguish between what is acceptable for internal communications, but require more formal approaches when communicating externally. For example, the use of emojis may be accepted for internal messages, but avoided when exchanging messages with a customer, vendor, or other external contact. Find out the practice at your workplace!

📁

Portfolio Reflection #31 – Reflections on Communication

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No matter whether you are looking to secure a work opportunity that is full-time, part-time, volunteer, a placement or internship, always approach it with the same a high level of professionalism.

Tips For Communicating

"Effective communication builds a positive atmosphere where teams can flourish. When communication is positive and encouraging, team members become stronger and work better together. Those who practice good communication skills make working beside them easier and less stressful."

– Indeed Career Advice[1]

For workplaces to operate smoothly and achieve their objectives, communication is critical. This includes verbal, written, non-verbal, and digital communication on the part of both the sender and the receiver. We'll address all of these different forms of communication in due time but, for now, let's flip through the accordion below for some concepts to keep in mind.

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Media Attributions

- Document File via CareerSpace

1. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/importance-of-business-communication

HOW WE COMMUNICATE

In many workplaces, written communication will be very important in your day to day activities. Here are some concepts to keep in mind with your written communication:

- Start with your goal: what are you trying to achieve with this communication? Are you trying to persuade? inform?
- Consider your audience: is it an employer, your professor, a colleague, your boss?
- Use appropriate salutations, such as Mr. or Ms. Use salutations unless invited to do otherwise by the person you're addressing.
- Be concise. Unless you are writing a full technical report, most business communications benefit from conciseness.
- Watch your tone. Keep it friendly, yet professional. Be cautious with humour and avoid slang. One great way to check the tone of your writing is to read it out loud before sending it. Your tone can influence

how your message is interpreted.

- Be aware of cultural differences. Diversity in workplaces means there is a greater likelihood for certain communications to be misunderstood. For example, not everyone may understand if you say "those products are a dime a dozen", but they'll likely understand if you say "those products are very common". Try to avoid idiomatic expressions and use plain language where you can.

Emails

An electronic mail message or email is a great way to provide direct, important, and timely information. When writing a professional email, for example, you'll want to keep the following in mind:

1. Start with a greeting. "Dear" is standard in formal correspondence, while "Greetings" is an acceptable alternative. When possible, put the recipient's name, then follow it with a comma or colon. Many organizations are OK with the use of "Hi" as a greeting, particularly for internal communications. Find out what the expectations are in your workplace.

   Examples:

   - Dear Dr. Chad,
   - Greetings, Ms. Oswald:
   - Dear Cathy Picard:
   - Hi Victoria,

2. Get to the point quickly. If you are thanking the recipient or responding to a recent message from them, start there.

   Examples:

   - Thank you for your contribution to the project brainstorm.
   - The materials you requested are scheduled to arrive tomorrow.

3. Explain what you're writing about. Think about (1) what you're hoping to make happen, and (2) how the person you're writing to can help. Be direct but not brusque.

   Examples:

   - I need some guidance on responding to this inquiry from Payroll.

- I'm a recent business graduate hoping to schedule an informational interview with you to learn more about digital marketing in the arts.

4. Keep it short. Respect your readers' time. If it's a weighty subject or requires lengthy discussion, set up a meeting.
5. End with a closing. Use a sentence that makes your meaning clear and/or sets up what's next.

Examples:

- I'll look forward to discussing this with you further at 11 a.m. Thursday.
- Please look over the attached draft report and let me know what revisions you'd like.

6. Sign off.

Examples:

- Sincerely,
- Yours truly,
- Thanks again,
- Appreciatively,
- Best regards,
- Respectfully,

7. Proofread before sending.

EMAIL CHECKLIST

√ Used proper salutations?

√ Proper tone? (read out loud)

√ Good grammar?

√ Correct punctuation?

√ Clear statement/purpose/ask?

√ Appropriate signature?

Grammarly is a "writing assistant" you can use to proofread and edit your documents. It checks for more than 250 types of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, and it allows users to choose editing input based on six different styles of writing, including business writing. There are free and paid (enhanced) versions. Here are 2 ways to use Grammarly:

1. In the web version, paste a document into an editing box, designate the style of document, and click on "Start Review".
2. Using the Grammarly Plug-in for Microsoft Office, when you click "Review" in Word, the Grammarly Wizard will appear. Click "Check," then select the writing style you need.

Sending Emails

There are numerous ways you can email a message to someone (e.g., To:, Cc:, Bcc:).

Using "To:"

The main intended recipient of your email should appear in the To line. This is the person you expect to take action or respond, or for whom the information is directly relevant.

Using "Cc:"

You can also send an email to additional recipients by using the Cc field. Before using the Cc field, know how to use it correctly. Cc ("carbon copy" or "courtesy copy") is used to send a message to recipients who may need to be informed about the information, but who are not expected to take action or to respond. People listed in the To and the Cc fields (their names and/or email addresses) are visible to others in the email.

Here are some examples of situations where you might "Cc someone":

- You've been asked by your manager to do so

- To keep someone updated on information that doesn't require their immediate action
- You want each person in the thread to be aware of who the message is going to

Here are some examples of situations where you should NOT use Cc:

- You expect a response
- You don't have consent to do so (you could disclose confidential information)
- To call someone out publicly or embarrass them

Using "Bcc"

You can also send an email to additional recipients by using the Bcc field. Before using the Bcc field, know how to use it correctly.

Bcc ("blind carbon copy") is used to send a message to a recipient without disclosing their name or address to others on the thread. Bcc is rarely used and is meant not to avoid transparency, but to protect confidentiality. For example, mass mailings often use Bcc in order to send the same message to many recipients without disclosing their personal information to each other. Using Bcc can also cut down on email traffic when someone mistakenly "replies all" to a large recipient group. If you're not sure how – or whether – to use Bcc in work emails, be sure to ask at your workplace.

"Misusing Cc and Bcc overwhelms people with too much information. Stuffing inboxes with unnecessary information makes email a distraction, diminishing its value and our ability to maintain focus on important work. By distracting attention from important work, this breach of professional email etiquette has serious consequences that sabotage productivity for individuals and companies."

– M. Thomas[1]

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1. https://maurathomas.com/productivity/email-etiquette/

Replying to Emails

When you receive an email, it's because the sender believed the subject of the email was relevant to you in some way. There are a few things to consider before deciding when or how to reply to an email.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=559#h5p-82*

Reply All

When you respond to an email with multiple recipients, it possible to send your response to everyone in the To and Cc lines by clicking "Reply All". However, in most cases, you should not use this function when responding to emails. **Here is when not to use Reply All:**

- To a department-wide or company-wide email
- When your response is only pertinent to the sender
- To an information-only type email, such as the time or date of a meeting (if you have a conflict or need more information, reply only to the person who sent the email. Let them sort out what does and doesn't work for the group)
- In response to congratulations or happy birthday emails for one person (just email the person being congratulated, not the whole group)
- To disagree with or correct someone
- To vent or comment about the chain

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication involves the exchange of messages using words – through speaking, listening, writing, and reading – such as in face-to-face discussions, phone calls, emails, or texts. There are many factors affecting the effectiveness of verbal communication, such as word choice, logical sequencing, using expressions, and word connotations. Strong verbal workplace communications have 4 facets:

1. Listening – e.g., Do you ask clarifying questions? paraphrase what you hear? refrain from interrupting?
2. Speaking – e.g., Do you use words correctly? enunciate? speak at an easily understood pace & volume?
3. Reading – e.g., Do you understand what you have read? Did you read thoroughly before asking questions or responding?
4. Writing – e.g., Do you write with conciseness and clarity? Do you minimize jargon and avoid slang?

Leaving Professional Voicemail Messages

You're about to make a business call. There is a possibility – as there always is – that you will be unable to reach the person you're calling and will need to leave a voice mail message instead. When making any business calls, take a moment in advance to think about what you will say if you get a voice mail. Here are some tips:

1. Think it through:

1. Ask yourself: what is the purpose of my call? What's the most important thing I need them to know?
2. How can I say what I need to say briefly?

2. When you call:

   1. State your full name and company name.
   2. Speak clearly.
   3. Keep it short and sweet: state the most important reason for your call.
   4. State if you would like to receive a call back, or if you will retry your call.

      - If you wish to be called back, state when you are available to take the call.
      - If you plan to call back, let them know when to expect your call.

   5. Speaking slowly, leave your name, contact number, and/or email address.
   6. End professionally, e.g., "I look forward to speaking with you".

Digital Collaboration Tools

Collaboration tools bring employees together despite physical distance, improving daily communication and keeping productivity up. Check out the presentation below for some details to consider regarding established practices and general etiquette when it comes to meeting virtually.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=559#h5p-83

General Tips

Most workplaces will have you mixing and matching different styles of communication and contextualizing your messaging accordingly. Here are some additional tips to keep in mind:

Watch Your Tone

Tip:	Instead of...	Say...
Be confident, but not overconfident	"You must agree that my plan is the best one."	"I believe my plan has some advantages."
Be courteous	"I didn't like the way you conducted that meeting today."	"I'd like to discuss how today's meeting ended."
Focus on the positive	"There's no way the project will be done by Friday."	"The project has been delayed while we make some improvements."
Use non-discriminatory language	"The guys in the warehouse will take care of that."	"The staff in the warehouse will take care of that."

Using Positive Language

Negative language usually contains words like not, can't, won't, or impossible. It emphasizes the negative, says what **cannot** be done, and implies blame. In fact, negative language can feel coercive or imply the other person has been careless or deceitful. On the other hand, **positive language** emphasizes what **can** be done, offers choices and alternatives, and is encouraging and helpful. So, instead of saying something like "your car won't be fixed for a week", you might opt to phrase it as "your car will be ready next week". This example shows how the same news can be delivered in a positive or negative way. Although the news is the same, it's more likely to be well received when delivered using positive language.

Now for some practice! In the drag and drop exercise below, practice pairing each "negative" sentence with its corresponding "positive" counterpart.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=559#h5p-87

Things to never say at work

Many things can be rephrased using positive language, but there are some phrases to avoid altogether.

"Employees who use these phrases will likely be replaced with those who convey a more positive attitude, collaborative spirit, proactive behavior and professional demeanor." – J. Smith[2]

Click here to download a list of phrases to avoid in the workplace given their potential to jeopardize your professional image. For each, we've offered an explanation as well as alternative approaches to try instead.

Now for some practice! In the drag and drop exercise below, practice pairing each "What not to say" phrase with its corresponding "What to say instead" counterpart.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

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2. www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/02/15/13-things-you-should-never-say-at-work/?sh=6a1eaa202632

online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=559#h5p-95

Slang at Work

Slang refers to informal words and phrases that are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people. Slang tends to be more common in spoken language than written.

The use of slang is discouraged in many workplaces: because it is content- or group-specific, it can easily lead to misunderstandings or miscommunication. For those accustomed to more formal language in the workplace – including customers – the use of slang can imply disrespect or not being taken seriously. Using more formal language allows more people to participate in communications at work. Here are some examples:

Instead of...	Use...
U	You
Wanna	Want to
Gotta	Have to
TBH	To be honest
Salty	Angry
On point	Exactly right

Remember: compared to texts, emails are considered to be a more formal form of communication in the workplace. For this reason, common text conventions – such as the use of emojis and acronyms – are often best left out of emails. This is another way you can promote clearer communication at work.

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Portfolio Reflection #32 – Notes on Slang

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=559#h5p-88

Non-Verbal Communication

Hopefully by now you've come to appreciate the context of your communication. Sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it. In some cases, you can communicate without saying or typing anything at all. Non-verbal communication involves the exchange of messages without words, such as via facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, tone of voice, and even emoticons. Here are some tips to consider how you communicate without speaking:

- Where possible, turn your camera on for video chats
- Be mindful of your personal appearance: look neat
- Keep a tidy workstation
- Dress professionally, in line with the workplace dress code
- Stand and sit with good posture
- Don't hunch: hold you shoulders back to convey confidence
- Keep your arms relaxed at your sides while talking
- Beware of crossing your arms, as it can suggest you are closed off
- Express undistracted attention by leaning forward in your seat

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EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Emotional Intelligence In the Workplace

Emotional intelligence refers to recognizing and working productively with your own emotions and the emotions of others. If you have good emotional intelligence, it means you are aware of your own feelings, can regulate them appropriately, can motivate yourself, show empathy to others, build rapport, and gain the trust of others.[1]

Portfolio Activity #33 – Emotional Intelligence

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=594#h5p-84

Being able to motivate yourself is a key part of Emotional Intelligence. If we rely on outside force

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1. Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional intelligence. New York: Bantam Books, 1995.

to motivate us ("extrinsic motivation"), we are at the whims of factors we cannot control. This is why developing "intrinsic motivation" can be helpful.

Watch the video below about intrinsic motivation and then answer the questions that follow:

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An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=594#h5p-85

A word about Empathy

According to Brené Brown, when someone shares something difficult or painful, connecting with their feelings is most likely to make things better for them. Take a moment to watch the video below about empathy.

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Having a difficult conversation with the boss

Some workplace conversations, while uncomfortable, are needed to reach solutions. Here are the steps you can take to have a difficult but successful conversation with your manager:

1. Request a private, face-to-face meeting: "I'd like to talk about my project report. When is a good time for us to meet?"
2. Take a positive mindset: think of the meeting as an opportunity for a constructive conversation.
3. Collect your thoughts: what key points do you want to make? What responses or questions do you anticipate?
4. Bring solutions: be prepared with suggestions. This shows you've given the matter careful consideration and want to be constructive.
5. Keep a calm demeanour and a neutral tone.
6. Express appreciation for the meeting, then address the reason for it right away. For example: "Thank you for making this time to talk. I've been struggling with my work-life balance and I wanted to talk about the idea of working from home more often."
7. Ask your boss for their perspective: listen actively. They may have a different perspective. Be open to what they say and ask for clarification if needed. If you don't like their response, you can offer further explanation of your perspective – just don't get defensive.
8. Get to a resolution – even if it's not the one you wanted. If your viewpoints differ, try to negotiate a resolution you can agree on. If that's not possible, focus on a way forward – what you CAN do. E.g., Say you wanted to negotiate a salary increase, but you are told it's not possible at present. You could ask if there are any specific items you could work on that would lead them to reconsider, and, if so, a specific date on which to discuss the idea again.

Your goal is to create openness, transparency, and acknowledgement of each other's goals in the workplace.

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Portfolio Activity #34 – Having a Difficult Convo. with a Manager

Watch the video below about having a difficult conversation with your manager. After, you'll be asked to reflect on 2 prompts.

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📻 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:* *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/careerworkforceready/?p=594#h5p-86*

Be sure to check this step-by-step checklist from Judy Ringer all about how to have difficult conversations.

Disagreeing Respectfully

- Disagreements are inevitable, so make them productive. There is a difference between disagreeing and doing so respectfully. Here are some guidelines.
- Focus on Facts: try to avoid speculating about someone's motives.
- Don't Get Personal: do not attack the other person's idea. Instead of poking holes in their idea, focus on presenting yours.
- Look for common ground: find something about their idea that you can agree on, e.g. "I agree with what you said about X. What if we did it this way instead?"

- Listen: don't just wait for your chance to respond. Listen actively and ask questions to check your understanding.
- Use "I" Statements: for example, instead of "Your idea is too close to the deadline," try "I see where you're coming from, but I'm concerned we're too close to the deadline for a change".
- Know When to Move On: sometimes you'll need to swallow your pride and walk away. Do so with class.

Managing Anxiety

If you feel anxious in certain situations, there are things you can do to build your resilience and mental strength. Here are some exercises you can do every day.

1. Visualize a positive outcome: start by thinking of an uncertain situation, such as whether you will be contacted for a job interview. Visualize the best possible outcome.
2. Flip your thinking: for example, when feeling anxious, try looking at the pros, rather than the cons. Ask yourself if you might see it as a reminder of what's important to you, an opportunity to pivot, a signal to reprioritize, a means of becoming more goal-oriented, or a challenge to do better.
3. Try something new: push yourself to try something just outside of your comfort zone.
4. Reach out and ask for help: connect with friends and family and actively nurture supportive relationships in your life.
5. Come up with some positive reminders for yourself: for example, think about what your biggest supporter would tell you, then say it to yourself.
6. Immerse yourself in nature: find a quiet environment with greenery and not too many people around. Breathe, relax and become aware of the sounds, smells and sights.

Asking For Accommodation

Employers are required by law to provide equal access and treatment to persons identified by a prohibited ground for discrimination. This includes, but is not limited to, people with disabilities, people from racialized communities, single parents, and recent immigrants. Often, accommodating someone means removing barriers. An employer must change the way they provide work – such as through physical changes or changing practices – to make it possible for people to participate in the workplace.

For example, some workers with disabilities may need accommodation to make their jobs accessible. This could range from a reorganized workstation, to a scheduling change, to real-time captioning during meetings, and so on.

If you decide to request accommodation at work, here are some tips to help you.

- You cannot be penalized for requesting accommodation – it's the law.
- Consider:
    ◦ What specifically is creating a barrier to you being able to do your job?
    ◦ What solutions can you think of that could remove those barriers?
    ◦ What might your manager identify as challenges to fulfilling your request?
    ◦ What strategies could meet both your needs and the needs of the workplace?
- Make your request in writing, e.g., by email. Ask for accommodation and explain why you need it. Keep a record of your communications.
- You may need to provide information that is directly relevant to your needs or restrictions (such as a doctor's note).
- Take part in any discussions about potential solutions.
- Consider any accommodations offered, even if they are not exactly what you expected.

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WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE

Etiquette refers to the customary polite behaviour of a particular context, such as workplaces. Knowing and observing etiquette is not intended to stifle individuality, but to help people by promoting mutual consideration and managing expectations.

Workplace etiquette varies from one organization to the next, but there are some best practices that many do observe. Let's look at those first and then discuss ideas such as entitlement, cross-cultural communication, and topics to avoid at work.

- Phone: find out what the etiquette is at your workplace for phone use. Here are some good general guidelines: keep your phone put away when it is not needed for work. Keep it on silent during meetings. If you ever have to take a call while others are present, go to any area where your call will not disturb others and always keep any private calls short.
- Meetings: give your undivided attention to the person speaking.
- Punctuality: let people know if you're running late. For every minute you think you'll be late, give 2 minutes warning.
- Complaining: don't complain about work, especially on social media. It is good practice to use professional social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, to connect with your work contacts and to reserve your other social media for personal contacts only.
- Don't be overly familiar: be friendly but beware of crossing boundaries, like over-sharing details of your personal life.

Entitlement In the Workplace

A sense of entitlement refers to one's belief they are owed something intrinsically, such as a certain level of job or pay. While entitlement tends to correlate with a drive for achievement, a willingness to work hard and to propose innovative ideas, people with a sense of entitlement also tend to break rules, put themselves above their coworkers and company, and believe – without any objective reason – that they are worth more than their counterparts. All told, displaying a sense of entitlement sends the signal that you are likely to make the work environment a more negative place.

An entitled person can also be a red flag to a hiring manager because they tend to be a lot more difficult to supervise: they are more likely to have a problem with authority, expect special treatment, or demand to be rewarded regardless of their performance.

Now that you know a sense of entitlement can hold you back in your career, you can take steps to manage any feelings of entitlement at work.

1. Be confident in your cover letter, resume, and interviews. Try not to come across as self-important, as this suggests you will be difficult to manage and may not fit in with the organization's culture.
2. Ensure you have realistic expectations.

   ◦ For example, you may need to anticipate the difference between rewards you expect and what you will actually earn, especially when you are starting out in your career. It helps to research things like starting wages in your target occupation and industry.
   ◦ Don't expect rewards and praise regardless of the quality of your work or the effort you put into it.
   ◦ Be willing to put in the time and to take on tasks that aren't necessarily your favourite. Show you are a team player.
   ◦ Promotions are not automatically made to a person just because of the length of time they've been with the employer. The same goes for regular raises.

If you want to earn more or progress in your career, ask what you need to do and set your expectations based on that goal. For example, look for ways to go above and beyond your basic job role and be able to demonstrate that you can meet or exceed expectations.

3. Be open to constructive criticism and learn from it.

Cross-cultural Communication

Workplaces are diverse, including in terms of culture. Every culture has its own set of tacit assumptions and tendencies. Here are some tips for better cross-cultural communication in the workplace.[1]

1. Maintain etiquette: many cultures expect a degree of formality at the start of communications, such as offering greetings, using names, and making introductions.
2. Avoid slang: people might understand the words you've said but not the context or the meaning, which could lead to confusion or even offence.
3. Speak clearly and not too quickly: give your listener time to understand your words.
4. Keep it simple: Using plain language facilitates clear, timely communication. Avoid convoluted language and jargon.
5. Practice active listening: check your understanding by restating what the other person has said. Ask clarifying questions.
6. Take turns speaking: rather than delivering a long monologue, talk in shorter exchanges.
7. Ask open-ended questions: for example, in many cultures it is difficult or embarrassing to answer a question with "no".
8. Be careful with humour: many cultures take business seriously and do not appreciate the use of jokes in a business context. (Tip: If someone responds or reacts in a way that you're not used to, that's OK! Remain empathetic and respectful.)

Topics Not to Discuss at Work

The emotions that tend to be aroused by controversial, hot-button topics can deplete the ability to reason, making it difficult or even impossible to maintain productivity and a collegial atmosphere. For this reason, there are some controversial, hot button topics to avoid at work.

For example, people tend to take hard positions on things like politics and religion and will not soften their positions based on argumentation. Similarly, talking about sex is "not only a misunderstanding waiting to happen, it's a surefire way to get fired".[2]

Oversharing information about your health or finances can make others uncomfortable and even colour their perception of your competence on the job. Talking informally about others in the workplace – such as

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1. https://potomac.edu/cross-cultural-communication-in-the-workplace/
2. https://www.forbes.com/sites/tonyewing/2020/09/01/9-topics-you-shouldnt-discuss-at-work-based-on-science/?sh=f06aa794ef5c

your supervisor or colleagues – is also inappropriate. If someone's workplace behaviour or performance needs to be addressed, this should be done by the parties directly involved and in a private, formal manner.

The good news is that there are still plenty of things to discuss at work, beginning with the task at hand! Other water cooler topics might include non-political news items, sports, science and technology, arts and music.

Be mindful that asking some questions – even with good intentions – can be considered microaggressions and not just in a workplace. To learn more, check out this Harvard Business Review article by Rakshitha Arni Ravishankar entitled "What's Wrong with Asking 'Where are you from'?"[3]

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- Lightbulb via CareerSpace

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3. https://hbr.org/2020/10/whats-wrong-with-asking-where-are-you-from

SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Congratulations! You have completed this module on Workplace Communications and Professionalism. In this module, you learned about workplace professionalism and etiquette. You understand the importance of cultivating a positive attitude and developing your emotional intelligence for career success. You've learned some concrete strategies to improve your workplace communication skills and you have some practical tips for engaging in difficult conversations at work. Along the way, we've helped you collect some valuable information and resources that you can include in your own portfolio so that you can take them forward in your career development efforts.

This is the sixth and final module of the series. Whether you completed all six modules, or taken only those that are most important to you at this point in your career development efforts, we hope that you have gained some valuable knowledge and skills that you can bring forward in your job search.

This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampusOntario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit: https://vls.ecampusontario.ca

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