

IMPORTANT JOB CRITERIA AND IDEAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

1. How many hours do you want to work per week?

2. What is your maximum commute (time and distance)?

3. How will you get to and from work? Drive my own automobile
 Get a ride from someone else Use public transportation Walk
4. How much money do you want/need to make? _____
 per hour per week per year
5. Are you willing/able to obtain further training to qualify for a particular job? Yes No
6. Do you prefer to: perform the same duties every day
 perform different duties every day perform a combination of new and routine duties
7. How much structure do you need in a job? A lot: I need to know *exactly* what to do and when Some: I need direction in terms of tasks and priorities, *and* flexibility to plan how and when I perform my duties Little: I need to plan my schedule independently, based on my judgment
8. What kind of pace do you prefer? Fast pace; tight deadlines don't bother me Relaxed: there are deadlines, but they are not urgent
 Slow and steady
9. How do you prefer to work? Alone Minimal interaction with others Daily interaction with others Lots of interaction with others
10. How much supervision do you need? Close supervision and lots of direction Regular supervision (daily check-ins) Minimal supervision and direction No supervision (self-employment)
11. Do you want to work: Indoors Outdoors
12. Do you prefer a work environment that is: Formal Informal

13. Are you better at: Analytic, linear problem solving Intuitive, big picture thinking

14. Do you prefer: Detailed, well-defined work Creative or strategic work

15. Do you prefer working with (check all that apply): Facts and information Ideas Numbers Your hands People Animals

16. Check the characteristics that are very important for you to have in a job:

- Challenges my intellect
- Involves some risk
- Includes travel
- Utilizes my creativity
- Helps others
- Allows me to express my ideas
- Work that I like
- Lots of opportunity for advancement
- Good benefits
- Lots of vacation time
- Being needed
- Job security
- Low stress
- Low responsibility

17. What other criteria are important to you?

18. What criteria are you willing to compromise on in order to find a job that you like, in the shortest amount of time possible?

UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL CHALLENGES

Read each challenge below. If you think that this challenge could impact your success once hired, check box “a.” Some challenges have a second box (“b”). Check this box if your challenge is so significant that you must avoid certain jobs or work environments.

The “a” boxes you check indicate areas where you may need to learn/improve skills, or utilize assistive technology. The “b” boxes have information that will help you avoid jobs or careers that would be frustrating or impossible for you to manage. (In some cases, accommodations may mitigate a challenge.)

Challenge Areas

1. Hard to make adequate eye contact
 - a. Could impact employment
2. Blurt out my thoughts (unintentionally offend/anger others)
 - a. Could impact employment
3. Interrupt others
 - a. Could impact employment
4. Uncomfortable meeting new people (knowing what to say/how to act)
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require working with the public
5. Difficulty speaking clearly (tend to talk too loudly/softly/rapidly/monotone)
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require public speaking (e.g. announcer, teacher, salesperson)
6. Difficulty following group conversations
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require frequent group interaction
7. Take words literally and misunderstand instructions/expectations

- a. Could impact employment
8. Slow processing of verbal information
- a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require talking to people and acting quickly on the information (e.g. customer service representative, emergency medical technician)
9. Easily distracted
- a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid work environments with noises, smells, other stimuli that will disrupt my focus
10. Not sure of how to start projects/what the steps are
- a. Could impact employment
11. Black and white thinking (hard to see options)
- a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require flexibility and judgment
12. Work too slowly
- a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require speed/large volume of output/involve tight deadlines
13. Difficulty prioritizing
- a. Could impact employment
14. Hard to multitask (rapidly shift attention from one thing to another)
- a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs with frequent interruptions, or that demand moving from one task to another quickly
15. Hard to refocus if interrupted during a task
- a. Could impact employment

16. Act impulsively, based on too little information
 - a. Could impact employment
17. Problems managing time (scheduling tasks; knowing how long tasks should/will take; being on time; meeting deadlines)
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs with tight deadlines, or that require the scheduling and tracking of tasks (e.g. administrative assistant)
18. Difficulty controlling emotions, especially frustration and anger (yell, shut down, walk away)
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that are stressful
19. High levels of anxiety
 - a. Could impact employment
20. Problems with dual-track processing (e.g. writing while listening; looking at someone and listening)
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that require this type of information processing (e.g. customer service representative who must listen to customers and type information into a database)
21. Takes a very long time to learn new, multi-step processes, even when I take notes
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs that have many administrative functions
22. Sensory processing/integration problems make me too sensitive, or not sensitive enough, to sights, sounds, smells, tastes or tactile sensations, and/or impact my balance or coordination
 - a. Could impact employment
 - b. I must avoid jobs or work environments that:

23. Other:

Questions

1. Which challenge areas are you willing/able to change?
2. Summarize the type of tasks and/or work environment that would be very difficult for you (example: *I would have difficulty being productive in a noisy facility where there are strong odors, such as a printing plant. Jobs where there are many deadlines, and pressure to produce quickly, would be too stressful for me*).

JOB RESEARCH TEMPLATE

Print or copy this form for each job that you are researching. If you are filling out the form on your computer, type your answers in the gray boxes. Otherwise write your answers in the space provided (use an additional sheet if needed).

Begin by using the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (www.bls.gov/ooh/) to gather basic information about the job or career that you are interested in. The questions below are matched to descriptions in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Click on the blue, underlined headings (e.g. What They Do, Work Environment, etc.) to read the full description. As you continue your research, you can add additional information from other sources to this sheet.

Name of job/career:

1. Read the description of *what they do*. What are the primary tasks? Are there categories or specialties in this line of work (lawyers, for example, may specialize in civil or criminal law, bankruptcy or property law, etc.)? What kind of equipment or technology is used? What types of companies hire in this field?

2. Read the description of *work environment*. How is the work environment described? Is overtime or weekend hours expected? How well do you think you could work in this environment?

3. Read the description of *how to become one*. Are you currently qualified to do this work? What, if any, additional training/certification/licensure do you need

now? How likely is it that you can acquire further education? How do you see yourself advancing in the field?

4. Read the description of *pay*. Are the average salaries what you were expecting?

5. Read the description of *job outlook*. Has the field undergone any major changes? How competitive is it? Is it growing or declining? Are certain jobs more abundant than others? What are the entry level jobs (note this if you would be entering this field)?

6. Review *similar occupations*. Which, if any, do you want to learn more about?

7. Based on what you have read what aspects of this job are attractive to you?

8. What aspects are unattractive?

9. What aspects of this occupation, if any, would you find to be difficult or impossible?

10. Based on what you know now, rate your interest in this occupation:

- a. I am very interested in this occupation and definitely want to learn more.
- b. Looks interesting; I have some concerns but will continue researching.
- c. Might be a possibility, but I do not want to actively research at this time.
- d./f. Take it off the list!

11. If you rated this job/career an A or B, which resources do you want to consult next?

- Visit job board(s) and find three to five job listings to review.
- Research occupations on another Web site, such as O*Net (www.onetonline.org).
- Google search on job/career (example: "What do veterinarians do?" "Jobs in the legal field").
- Visit the Web site of professional association.
- Read a professional journal/newsletter/blog.

CHEAT SHEET!

Good and Bad Questions to Ask on an Informational Interview

Good Questions

An informational interview will probably last about 30 minutes. Prepare in advance six to eight questions to ask. Your questions should enhance what you have already learned during your preliminary career research. The questions below are suggestions; feel free to add your own.

What do you like best and least about your job?

How did you get into this field?

What is the typical career track?¹

What kind of education is required?

What is a typical day like?

What is the best way to break into the field?

Are there publications or associations that you recommend?

What surprised you about this job/industry?

What does it take to be successful?

What kind of skills and experience do employers value the most?

What are the typical work hours?

What skills are most important in this work?

What is the best way to find work in this field?

What is the salary range for [entry level, mid-level, management]² positions?

Do you know of other people I could talk to? May I use your name?³

-
- 1 Career track refers to the typical progression of promotions and increased responsibilities as people advance in a profession.
 - 2 Do not ask about all job levels; ask about *your* job level. Otherwise, the individual may think that you are asking about his salary.
 - 3 “May I use your name?” is asking permission to tell the new contacts who referred you. Referrals from a mutual acquaintance usually respond positively to meeting requests.

Stealth Inquiries

These questions can give you an idea of how much multitasking and interpersonal interaction a job involves, without asking directly!

Do You Work a Lot With Other People, or Mostly by Yourself?

How would an introvert like this kind of work?

How would you describe the pace of the job?

Are there a lot of interruptions?

Would this work be difficult for someone who needs quiet time to focus on tasks?

Bad Questions

Inappropriate questions to ask at an informational interview concern basic job readiness or job search skills. It is also important to avoid queries that make you seem desperate. People want to help other professionals, not people who are desperate!

Examples of inappropriate questions:

- What jobs am I qualified for?
- How can I learn to make small talk?
- How can I tell if my communication problems are because of me, or someone else?
- I've had 20 interviews and no job offers. Do you know why that is?
- How does LinkedIn work?
- I'm willing to take any job. Are there openings in your company?
- What should I say when I'm asked about my greatest weakness?

When in doubt, check it out with someone knowledgeable, who you trust!

DECODING THE LANGUAGE OF JOB POSTS

Correctly interpreting the language of job openings is useful during several stages of the job search:

- *Preliminary career research*: job openings define job tasks and required skills, and help you determine whether a job or industry is a good match for your interests and abilities.
- *Writing résumés and cover letters*: enables you to include information about your experience, skills and education that matches employer needs.
- *Job seeking*: saves time and effort when you apply only to jobs that you are qualified for.
- *Interview preparation*: helps you prepare responses that emphasize employer needs.

Job posts contain clues about:

- primary job tasks
- skills needed to complete tasks
- the type and amount of experience needed
 - industry-specific (e.g. health care, informational technology)
 - number of years
 - level (e.g. entry, senior, manager, director)
- work environment
 - pace, level of supervision, level of responsibility, etc.
- amount and nature of interaction with others.

When reading job postings, be aware that:

- The most important skills are listed first.
- Primary tasks are usually mentioned in the overall job description, and then repeated in lists of requirements and/or duties.

- Key skills are often emphasized with words and phrases such as: “*extensive experience...*” “*strong knowledge of...*” “*proven track record...*” “*expert...*” “*exceedingly...*” “*excellent...*” “*take charge of...*” “*heavy contact with...*”
- Non-negotiable items are identified with phrases like: “*extensive/verifiable experience in...*” “*must include...*” “*do not apply unless you meet these requirements.*”
- Negotiable items are identified with phrases like: “*preferred...*” “*desired...*” “*the ideal candidate will have...*” “*is a plus...*” and “*should be familiar with...*”
- The pace of work environment is indicated with phrases such as: “*must work well under pressure*” ...“*deadline-driven environment*” ...“*hectic*” ...“*fast paced.*”
- The phrase “*ability to get along with diverse groups of people*” refers to an environment where you must adapt to individuals with different needs and work styles. “*Self-starter*”...“*fast learner*”...“*independent*” mean that you are expected to initiate and complete tasks without a lot of supervision. “*Ability to maintain a sense of humor*” means, “Watch out! This is a stressful, frustrating job!”
- The ubiquitous requirements for “good people skills/teamwork” and “ability to multitask” are relative. They can mean very different things depending on a particular job, industry and company. Refer to the information you gathered during preliminary research and informational interviews, and what you already know about an industry.

How to Read Job Postings

1. Highlight or underline key words and phrases.
2. Notice which requirements are repeated in the posting.
3. Pay attention to the types of tasks and skills that are emphasized: technical, organizational, interpersonal.

DAILY JOB SEARCH TO-DO LIST

Monday (_____) date	Tuesday (_____) date
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____
Wednesday (_____) date	Thursday (_____) date
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____
Friday (_____) date	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	

HOW TO PREPARE ANSWERS TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Use this worksheet to plan your responses to these common interview questions. The use of bullet points allows you to practice your responses in a conversational tone. Memorizing answers word for word will make you sound mechanical and over-rehearsed.

Process

1. Review your preliminary career research, notes from informational interviews and proving of skills for writing your résumé. What are the top requirements for this occupation? How do you meet them?
2. Review the job post. What are the three to five most important criteria the employer is looking for? How do you meet them? Why are you interested in working for *this* company?
3. Choose one or two resources (books or Web sites) and research typical questions and suggested responses. So that you don't become overwhelmed, work on two or three questions at a time.
4. Be sure that you understand what is really being asked (don't take the questions too literally).
5. Ask someone you trust to review your responses and make suggestions.

Generally, your answers should be between three to five sentences long. Too little information doesn't convey your skills and abilities. Too much information will confuse the person who is interviewing you. *If the interviewer wants more information, he or she will ask.*

Key Concept: Understanding the skills needed for the job, and proving your qualifications, makes it easier to answer interview questions. Prepare examples that show how you applied key skills and the results you achieved. One way to do this is the SAR method: **S**ituation...**A**ction...**R**esults (describe a situation, the action you took and the results achieved).

Plan Your Responses to Anticipated Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

Since this is a summary of your background, and why you want the specific job, your response can be longer and include four or five key points.

Key points:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Why did you choose this field?

Key points:

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. What are your greatest strengths?

Key points:

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. What are your greatest weaknesses?

Key points:

- _____
- _____
- _____

5. Describe your best and worst boss.

Key points BEST:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Key points WORST:

- _____
- _____
- _____

(Author's Note: Questions can be customized based on the type of job an individual is seeking.)

BEHAVIOR CHANGE WORKSHEET

Your behavior influences the way that you are perceived in the workplace. Your supervisor and co-workers form impressions of you based on how you act. How they treat you is based on those impressions. For example, a person who interrupts will be perceived as rude and other people will avoid working with him or her.

Your goal in the workplace is to behave in ways that will be perceived as professional and courteous. Use this worksheet to increase your awareness of how a problem behavior affects your co-workers, and what you can do to change their impression of you.

1. Briefly describe the problem behavior:

2. How do others react when you engage in this behavior?

3. How do they treat you as a result?

4. How do you want others to perceive you?

5. How does your behavior need to change so that you are perceived positively?

6. When you are making a good impression on others, how will your work life be better?

Worksheet 7.2

DAILY ACTIVITY LOG

Here is a sample of the daily log, which typically runs from 8:00am to 6:00pm.

Instructions: Copy this sheet for each business day over the next one or two weeks. Record your daily activities in 15-minute increments. If an activity lasts over 15 minutes, draw a vertical arrow to note its length. In the column marked Priority, indicate the urgency of each activity: C = Critical; I = Important; L = Low priority.

Time	Activity	Priority
8:00-8:15am	Respond to emails	I
8:15-8:30am		
8:30-8:45am		
8:45-9:00am		
9:00-9:15am		
9:15-9:30am		
9:30-9:45am		
9:45-10:00am		
10:00 -10:15am		

ESTIMATING AND MEASURING TIME TO COMPLETE TASKS

1. Task: _____

2. Due date: _____

3. Steps and *estimated* time to complete

Step 1: _____

Estimated Time to Complete _____

Step 2: _____

Estimated Time to Complete _____

Step 3: _____

Estimated Time to Complete _____

Step 4: _____

Estimated Time to Complete _____

Step 5: _____

Estimated Time to Complete _____

Total time: _____

4. Start task at _____(time)

End task at _____(time)

5. At halfway point, my goal is to have the following amount of work completed:

6. *Actual* time to complete each step

Step 1: _____

Actual Time to Complete _____

Step 2: _____

Actual Time to Complete _____

Step 3: _____

Actual Time to Complete _____

Step 4: _____

Actual Time to Complete _____

Step 5: _____

Total time: _____

7. If the actual time to complete a step/task took longer than the estimated time, then:

a. What obstacles, if any, did I not anticipate?

b. How can I approach the task differently next time?

PROBLEM SOLVING ACTION PLAN

1. Describe the problem (briefly): _____

2. State your goal (desired outcome): _____

3. Define what is getting in the way of reaching your goal: _____

4. List possible solutions for each obstacle, and the pros and cons of each. Then rate the chances of success, using this scale:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Not likely | 2. Unsure |
| 3. Somewhat likely | 4. Very likely |

Then, rate the cost or effort required to implement each solution, using this scale:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Great cost/effort | 2. Moderate cost/effort |
| 3. Little cost/effort | 4. No cost/effort |

Solution A: _____

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Chance of success: _____ Cost/effort required to implement: _____

Solution B: _____

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Chance of success: _____ Cost/effort required to implement: _____

Solution C: _____

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Chance of success: _____ Cost/effort required to implement: _____

5. Which solution will you commit to trying? _____

6. How will you implement the solution? _____

7. How you will you track your progress? _____

WEEKLY GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

For the week of: _____

Goal 1: _____

Specific steps I will take toward this goal:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

Goal 2: _____

Specific steps I will take toward this goal:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

Goal 3: _____

Specific steps I will take toward this goal:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

Progress

Goal	Action Steps Achieved?	Results
1:	a. yes no	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2:	a. yes no	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3:	a. yes no	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

My level of satisfaction with my progress this week:

Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Not satisfied

DISCLOSURE NEED AND ACTION SCALE

How Serious Is the Problem?	Possible Action Steps
<p>Level 3: Immediate Action Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Formal disciplinary action; probation or two weeks' notice to improve <input type="checkbox"/> Formal meeting with supervisor about performance problems; written warning; placed on Performance Improvement Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure and formal accommodation request <input type="checkbox"/> Engage a professional to intervene on my behalf <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<p>Level 2: Corrective Action Needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Same performance problem has been mentioned more than twice <input type="checkbox"/> I am consistently re-doing assignments <input type="checkbox"/> Assignments are late on a regular basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure and formal accommodation request <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to supervisor about difficulties; suggest solutions without formal disclosure <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a co-worker for ideas about improving performance <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate whether this is the right job or career <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<p>Level 1: Needs My Attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Working very long hours <input type="checkbox"/> Confused about what is expected <input type="checkbox"/> Continually re-checking work; forgetting steps <input type="checkbox"/> Told that I am asking too many questions/should know what to do by now <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious and unsure about performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a co-worker for ideas on improving performance <input type="checkbox"/> Meet regularly with supervisor to clarify priorities and expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Use check lists; make notes <input type="checkbox"/> Request additional training <input type="checkbox"/> Find ways to manage stress and anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Other: