



Your Personal Jobseeker's Guide

Hi there,

I gather you are looking for a job, or are thinking you may need to soon. What are you - between jobs, thinking about making a change, getting back into the workforce, or leaving school and just starting out? You've probably had some helpful advice passed your way by government and private employment agencies. Maybe you've followed it and still haven't managed to get work. There's nothing wrong with the advice - it's just that every other jobseeker is using it. What you need is something in addition that will set you apart from them - your own 'X' factor. This guide will focus on you personally, on how you approach it all, from deciding what you would really like to do if you had the choice, to making the best impression at the final interview, then keeping the job when you get it. Forget about "if" - that's for losers. Just think "**when**". Right from the very beginning, start believing in yourself and you *will* make it happen.

The Ideal Job

President, rocket scientist, formula-one champion, another Bill Gates, or a Hollywood actor... don't dismiss a single one! If you dream of being any of these, or something else out of the ordinary, hold onto the thought and the feeling. It's exactly what you will need to get you that first, very important job. If you don't believe it can take you to the top, check out the history of your role models, see where they came from. I'd be willing to bet not too many jumped straight into the envious spot they find themselves in now. Why should you be any different?

It isn't even necessary to start at the bottom of the particular industry you eventually want to graduate in. If waiting table or cleaning toilets would see you getting an Oscar in a few years, wouldn't you be happy to do it? Okay, so you aren't that ambitious. Maybe you're just looking for an income which will get you off welfare, or something to tide you over while you decide what you really want to do. There's no secret to getting any job, whether dreamworthy or dull by comparison. You just have to want it - seriously, passionately, desperately enough to go those extra yards to get it. And you have to know in your own mind that it will launch you on your way towards your ultimate goal.

What Working Means

You are probably already doing it - keeping the home tidy and the kids in check, fixing your car when it needs it, helping out friends and relations with those jobs that can't be done by one. In truth, your day is very full and you might think that working for a living is pretty much the same with the added bonus of a wage at the end of the week. Bear in mind, however, that you are most likely the one who decides your current schedule. When you accept a position working for someone else, all of that changes.

Your new boss expects you to be punctual and consistent. No longer can you have a late night and sleep in the next day. You may have to get up earlier than usual in order to organise your partner and the kids before you leave for work. There's travelling time to consider which will make your day away from home longer than the hours you will be paid for. And what will you do in the case of an emergency? Can you expect your employer to be understanding if you have to take time off, or are frequently late because your car keeps breaking down? When you get that job it will alter your life considerably and you'll have to make adjustments. It will become a priority. But it will be worth it because you'll be much better off, financially and otherwise.

Attitude

Thinking about the disruption to your normal routine can affect your mood. You might be feeling a bit glum, maybe are blaming circumstances for bringing you to this point. Believe me, that's good! Not that you feel this way, but that you recognise the fact. What you need to do now is change that attitude to a positive one before it gets worse, especially now at the very beginning. Accept that this major step will bring improvements which far outweigh the inconveniences.

Attitude shapes the way you approach situations, so being optimistic when looking through the employment prospects makes it seem less of a chore. Add light-hearted to this and you'll find

yourself amused by some of the jobs for which you are entirely unsuited and would probably make a total hash of. Enjoy the search for the job that is for you, and carry this same cheerful attitude with you as you make the first application. Enthusiasm will show in the words you write, the same way people you meet see it on your face, in your body language and how you are with them. Not only do you have to make a good impression, but you need to be happy in the knowledge that you are doing the best for yourself. Adopt a good attitude and it will serve you well.

Employers

The majority are the same as you. The difference is that they started at the bottom some time ago and are now in a position to give you the same chance. Just for a moment, imagine the roles are reversed and you are the boss. What kind of a person are you looking for? Will their appearance matter, or are you more interested in qualifications and prior experience? Maybe attention to detail is important, honesty and trustworthiness too. The job might be repetitious, physically demanding, or require special attributes such as good people skills and a cheerful, friendly nature. What would you look for, and how do you think you might determine whether one applicant was more suitable than another? These are the things your prospective employer is hoping to find in you. If you can figure out what they are, you can make sure the new boss knows you have them.

Choosing a Job

It will be a waste of your time going for every job that comes along. Unless you have some work experience or qualifications behind you, the choices will be limited. Don't get despondent if you can't find something suited to you straight away – the right one will come up eventually, but you have to keep looking. In the meantime, go back over those you dismissed because you don't have one or more of the pre-requisites. What are these special requirements? Is it possible that you could acquire them by doing a course, or perhaps by getting some volunteer work in a similar field to gain a bit of experience? Doing something positive and worthwhile will help you in a number of ways. In particular, employers will usually give prime consideration to applicants who are already working, whether unpaid or not, because it shows they have what it takes.

Okay, let's assume you go for some kind of training, or are going to give a portion of your time to a charitable organisation. For a start, you can concentrate on actually doing a job instead of just looking for one. Fair enough, there's no money in it. In the case of a course, it would probably cost to enrol. But while you're getting a handle on an unfamiliar software package, or learning to stack crates with a forklift, use the opportunity to boost your confidence and determination. Imagine it's a real job which you intend to keep by showing that you can do it better than anyone. The same applies to voluntary work. For the time you are there helping out, forget the selfish motive of bettering your prospects – simply enjoy being able to give something without being asked and do whatever you have to do with the same drive and enthusiasm you will be putting into the paid job you are going to get. Whatever certificates or references you gain from your achievements will give you an edge later on.

Then there is the time spent on whatever you decide to try. This is going to take you away from your normal routine and will give you some idea of the changes you may have to make when you do get full-time work. If it is similar enough to the job you intend to try for, the hands-on experience will help you decide if that type of work is what you eventually want to do. Most importantly, taking this practical approach, especially when it is unpaid, gives you the opportunity to develop a good work ethic, the kind you will need to convince your future employer that you have. And this will be much easier when you know what you are capable of because you have proved it to yourself in practice.

Your Application - First Contact

Sounds a bit like something out of a sci-fi movie, doesn't it? Actually, the comparison isn't far wrong. Whether applying in writing, by phone, or in person, the people you are going to be dealing with will be alien to you, and they know nothing whatever about you. Their personal tastes, hang-ups and what might be going on in their lives at the time shouldn't have any bearing on the way they receive you - but it will. Your first contact must be in consideration of this. Give them what they have asked for, and just a little more if you believe it is important, but beware of waffling on. Having to wade through many applications is time-consuming, so make yours concise and to-the-point – they'll thank you for it.

Sometimes employers require a hand-written application. This will often be the case where the job involves a certain amount of writing as opposed to typing. Draft the letter, then take a long hard look at it. Spider's scrawl needs improvement. Practise your script, write slower, form the letters more consistently, try a different pen, then after five or ten minutes compare the results with the original. If it seems better, that's great. If not, you may have to just go with what you've got. Don't make the mistake of having someone else write the application for you – it will come back to bite you!

Always be pleasant, polite and respectful, especially with those people you may have to go through before you actually see the boss. Make a special effort with the ones who seem off-hand or rude – get them on side and they'll prove valuable allies later. Adopt this friendly attitude before you start writing, or pick up the phone. If you feel ratty after a bad night, hold off on the application for half an hour and go for a walk, greet people in the street, cheer someone up and get yourself into the mood. Then go back and contact the aliens. In a positive frame of mind, you will be more relaxed and that will be reflected in your words and tone of voice.

Second Contact

When someone does get back to you and either wants more information, or is offering an interview, don't thank your lucky stars, but thank yourself instead because you're the achiever here. You have got to the second stage and you are going to make it count. This is where you can reinforce the profile you outlined in the initial application, and can add something that makes you a real person rather than a simple statistic. Keep the optimistic attitude going. If you are starting to feel nervous at the prospect of an interview, that's a sign that you don't want to mess up; which, in turn, means you really want this job.

Focus on that. Work on being relaxed and, in particular, yourself. This is the hat you'll be wearing when you meet the interviewer, so ensure it fits. And make any adjustments you need to now so that you look good in it.

Before The Interview

If you have sufficient time, do a bit of research into the company and the industry in general. Familiarise yourself with the products or services they provide so that you can answer some of those awkward questions which might pop up unexpectedly. Visit the factory, the store, the workshop, or office, stand outside and watch people coming and going. Get a feel for the place and the types who work there. Do you get the impression that it's all rush and tear, or does it seem pretty casual? This is what you will have to fit into. You could even have a drink (non-alcoholic for you) and a chat at the local bar or café some of them frequent. Just don't be too obvious – this is a spying mission!

Back at home, get ready to do your most important preparations. You will soon be face to face and want to be at your best. For starters, what are you going to wear? Unless you are looking for a spot in a rock band, go with smart. Masses of fashionable creases in your clothes can imply that you aren't all that particular. And guys, have a shave. Designer-stubble may impress your peers, but if it isn't in the job description, it will drop you a few places on the list. Sorry to be blunt, but the world we live in isn't always as cool as we'd like.

Once you've spruced up, take a look in the mirror. This is the person your interviewer will see. If you believe, in your estimation, that you've scrubbed up alright, it will boost your confidence. Now let's deal with who you are inside. Still looking in the mirror, say a few words: "Good afternoon. I'm very pleased to meet you. Thank you for giving me this opportunity." Over-the-top, you reckon. Maybe try: "G'day, mate. How goes it?" The choice is yours. If you've done your research properly, you will know what's likely to be acceptable and what isn't. All you need to know with this exercise is: did the greeting seem genuine?

Here's something that might help. Actors use it to perfect the character they're portraying. It's called "baggage". This refers to the real stuff of life – the problems, the sadness, the worries that plague constantly – and it is what we carry around with us. If it suits the part, an actor will draw on it; if not, it is banished and forgotten. This is what you must do. Any negative baggage that is a distraction – leave it behind. You are a cheerful person with a likeable character, and you mean what you say. Keep talking to yourself in the mirror until the words reflect what you see in your face and body language. Once *you* believe it, so will everyone else.

On The Day

Punctuality should really speak for itself. Businesses run to the clock. Managers and supervisors need to know that the workers in their section are on the job when they should be. Even employees can get upset if they have to keep covering for someone who never arrives on time. Set the precedent by getting to your interview early. Along with your neat appearance and friendly nature, being on time puts you in front of the latecomers. And if there ends up being a choice between you and another applicant, extra points scored will tip the balance in your favour.

There also may be occasions when you will be required to perform some task such as filling in a form with your personal details. Having arrived early, you won't be in a rush to do this, and as it will be in your own hand, the practice you did at home starts to make sense. Guaranteed, this little addition isn't just to find out if you remember where you live!

Don't be surprised if you aren't the only applicant in reception or an outer room. Like you, most of them will be nervous. What they won't have is the edge you've given yourself before the day. Avoid being too smug about this, and if you do chat with any of them, don't give away your secret. Just display your confidence and relaxed attitude as your normal personality. It will put the others on the back foot. If they stare or smirk at your smart appearance, that's a bonus - they are kicking themselves for not being the same, and are probably wondering why they bothered coming because it's pretty obvious who's most likely to get the job. Don't feel guilty about any of this – it's simple gamesmanship. Winners use it all the time.

The Interview

You intend to be polite and respectful towards your interviewers, but no way will you be intimidated by them. Nor will you get rattled. Before you go in, relax as much as you can. Focus on something that will calm your nerves – the chat you will have with a friend afterwards, or tonight's party. This will be an important experience, an enjoyable one you can maybe have a laugh over later. For now, you can only do your best, and it *will* be good enough. Believe that.

The person you are about to meet already knows some of your attributes from your application and work history, so you won't have to repeat any of this unless asked. What you will need to do, however, is reinforce your personality and work ethic. When appropriate, speak confidently about your ability and eagerness to do the job in question. Be positive that you are comfortable working alone or as part of a team. Keep the conversation light, but beware of being too casual and flippant – remember the old saying: “familiarity breeds contempt”.

At all times, speak clearly and not too fast. If you are asked to repeat something, it's most likely because you've been gabbling or mumbling. Apologise: “Sorry. I'm just a bit nervous.” The interviewer will understand and be forgiving as long as you make every effort to continue intelligibly.

Focus your attention with appropriate eye contact. Talking to the wall or window behind the interviewer won't do you any good – they aren't going to give you the job. And many believe a person who won't look them in the eye has something to hide. Also, keep your eyes on them when they are talking so that they know they have your attention, but don't stare at them. And if you notice something about them that looks peculiar or amusing, don't stare at that either, especially if it's a physical blemish.

Ensure you have your body language under control. Try not to fidget, bite your lip or twiddle your hair. In fact, keep your hands away from your face, in particular your mouth when you are speaking. If you have to stand during the interview, clasp your hands loosely in front of you; if seated, rest them on your lap. Stuffing them in pockets is too casual, and folding them will make you seem arrogant and overbearing. I wouldn't advise crossing your legs, either. If you are still tense, one of them could go to sleep and if you fall over on your way out – imagine that!

You will be asked a few questions during the interview. Having done your research on the company, you will already have some of them covered. The odd one, however, could stump you. For example, how will you answer questions like: “What do you hope to achieve in this job?” or: “Why do you believe you are the best person for the job?” Don't think it won't happen – it has to me a few times. Try to imagine the kind of questions they might ask and figure out some answers for them. If it's something for which you are totally unprepared, stay calm and say something like: “I'm sorry. You've caught me on the hop, there. Before I answer, I'd like to know a little more about the job, if you could spare the time.” After that, you'll have to wing it.

Having read this, you may find a few more things you need to brush up on before the day. So be it.

A Tour of the Workplace

Occasionally someone will take you around the workplace. Usually this will be as part of a group, but not always, depending on the type of work and how far you've managed to get through the selection process. Take in as much as you can. Imagine you are already employed there and need to know not only everything about your own job, but also where it sits in the scheme of things. Factories and large offices are classic examples of departmentalisation – cogs in a machine, if you like. How does the part you will be playing fit in, and which of the rest are likely to affect your efficiency?

If you have the opportunity, ask questions. But make sure they are pertinent and that you truly want to know the answer. Refrain from annoying your guide with irrelevant quizzing which is merely to impress – I doubt it will. If the tour takes place before the actual interview, save a question or two for that. But again, make sure the asking will improve your chances and not detract from them.

Waiting For The Good News

It may only take a few days, perhaps longer. Utilise the time to check on travel to and from the job. I realise you haven't got it yet, not one hundred percent, but when you do, you won't want to be late on your first day. You have, of course, already been there at least once, but was it during peak times, or later in the day when traffic was easier and you had plenty of leeway? Check it again. See how long it takes to get there and whether there are any hassles. If using the car, find the best route, the cheapest parking plus alternatives in case the lots are full when you arrive. Plan this trial the day before you do it. Next day put it into practice, exactly as if you are going to work. Allow some extra minutes in case of delays. And if you get out of bed too late, by all means try again the following day, but get really serious next time – this isn't a game: it's your future you're being so casual about!

Keeping The Job

There are ways and ways. Sometimes, just doing what you have to and no more will keep you on side with your fellow employees and, in some instances, avoids confrontations with unions. Managers, however, can take a different view and are often on the lookout for workers who are keen to diversify and learn new skills. They will also be keeping an eye on those who seem to spend too much time standing around doing nothing, especially when they think they aren't being watched. Rather than being one of these, you should be the person the bosses earmark to fill the position after they've sacked the malingerer.

Once on the job, be aware of your environment and what makes it tick. Bide your time, but be ready to take on more responsibility when the opportunity arises. And when you do step up the ladder a rung or two, don't look down your nose at the ones still on the bottom. The social skills you've learned and practised to get you there will also maintain your popularity in the workplace with everyone you come into contact with, and some you don't.

Watch out for the cliques. They are usually there, small groups of workers who band together, believing that they run the show and not the bosses. By all means join them if you fit in and it suits your purpose. If you prefer to remain independent, continue to respect their position and try not to undermine it. You will find other ways to improve your position without making enemies. Always be helpful, pleasant and cheerful, especially with the resident grumps. Given time, you might even get a smile out of them.

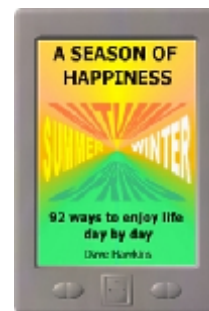
Learn on the job so that you can do it efficiently and without causing problems for others. If someone else needs a hand with theirs and it's okay by the supervisor, give it to them. Just make sure your own work doesn't suffer as a result. If there's a social club and you are asked to join, at least think about it. This can be another source of inside information relating to possible promotions and future company policies that will eventually affect you.

First and foremost, before you leave home for work, unload your personal baggage. Your fellow workers have their own problems to deal with – they don't need to suffer the consequences of yours as well. Above all, enjoy working, the work you are doing and the people who are doing it with you. Then the days will seem shorter, and you won't start hating Monday mornings.

CHECKLIST

- Attitude**
Adopt a good one that sees you approaching the present and the future cheerfully and optimistically. Be pleasant, polite and always respectful. Find enjoyable ways to put you in a positive frame of mind.
- The Job Search**
Consider all occupations that you think you might like and be good at. Find out what qualifications are needed for the ones you have in mind, then decide if it is possible for you to get them. Treat every job you apply for as if it will eventually lead to something much better.
- Lifestyle Changes**
When you get a job, it will cause major changes to your normal routine. Test this out beforehand to decide how to cope with the new situation.
- What Do Employers Expect?**
Consider the industry and the company that you intend to join, then try to imagine the kind of person you would want if you were in the boss's shoes.
- In The Meantime**
While you are searching for the right job, enrol in a pertinent course, or do some voluntary work. This will give you not only qualifications and some current references, but will also provide an idea of how full-time work is going to affect your present routine.
- Your Initial Application**
Whether by phone, in person, or in writing, get into the right frame of mind before you start. Your mood and attitude will be reflected in your words and tone of voice. You need to come across as a genuine, pleasant person who will be an asset to the team.
- People In The Loop**
Treat everyone you come in contact with as if they will have a say in your suitability. Doorman, receptionist, even the nobody in the elevator – that could be your prospective employer.
- Before The Interview**
Research the company, the industry and gather as much information as you can about the products and services they provide. You are offering to join them and you need to know something about the business they are in.
- The Day Of The Interview**
Be punctual, dress appropriately and behave like the winner that you are. And relax. You are the best one for the job, so project that with everything you do and say. Don't let yourself be intimidated. Maintain eye contact, especially when they are talking to you, and always be respectful. Remain calm and avoid getting rattled.

This guide is brought to you by www.aseasonofhappiness.com
with our compliments
and a sincere wish for your future success
in both work and in life



Make the most of your unique personality to get ahead of the rest and win that job.