

# Job Search Handbook



**Community and Health Services**

Social Services

[www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)



# Getting Started



## Welcome to Ontario Works

You've probably heard that finding a job is a full-time job – an expression that has a lot of truth to it. Not only will you be looking for work – in perhaps new ways than you've used in the past – but you may be researching positions, getting experience through volunteer work, training for new skills and attending workshops to prepare for employment.

Your case manager will work with you to decide what is reasonable for your unique situation. You will complete an Outcome Plan Agreement – your contract with Ontario Works (OW) that will set out these requirements. Ontario Works may provide funds to support these employment activities.

This handbook will help you along the way. It outlines how OW can help you and how you can identify your skills, develop a job goal, prepare for your job search and market yourself to employers.

Although it may be difficult to see it as such, this is your opportunity to work towards new employment goals. We're here to work with you as you get back to work.

### OW Can Help With:

- Job-search guidance
- Developing and enhancing skills
- Resumé development
- Referrals to accreditation services, job search workshops, employment-preparation workshops, employment resource centres and other available and appropriate community based programs
- Providing financial incentives for eligible employers who hire you
- Directing you to employers with job openings
- Accessing funds to cover employment-related items
- Skills-training programs, when eligible

## Are You Ready For Employment?

Beginning to search for a job can be difficult. Here are some tips to get you started. Your case worker can answer any questions you may have.

Have you:

- Identified your skills, education and availability?
- Found the training or education you need?
- Set realistic goals?
- Identified your career goal (sometimes referred to as a job objective). You can go to [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com) (username: ontarioworks, password: york) to find jobs that match your interests and skills.
- If you have a criminal record, review the information on the website for the National Parole Board of Canada ([www.pbc-clcc.gc.ca](http://www.pbc-clcc.gc.ca)) to determine if you are eligible for a pardon. If you are, you can follow the process to get one.

## Ways to Find a Job

Things may have changed since you last looked for work. There are many resources that you can use to help you explore opportunities and new ways of finding job openings.

- York Region OW offices have employment resource centres that are free to all OW participants and residents of York Region. These centres have the necessary job searching tools, including no-cost faxing, photocopying and Internet.
- Research the labour market. “Labour market” includes information about industries, job requirements and the predictions for future jobs, wages, trends and statistics. Having this information will help you decide what your job goal is and prepare for a job interview.
- Go online to explore Service Canada’s Job Bank at [www.jobsetc.ca](http://www.jobsetc.ca). It’s a useful site for job hunters.
- While you’re on the Internet, visit the National Occupational Classification system that offers over 30,000 Canadian job titles and descriptions. Each job has a four digit code that defines the job and gives a general list of skills and qualifications required. Go to [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca), click on “Programs and Policies” then on National Occupational Classification.
- Don’t forget Career Cruising, the site mentioned in the previous section, for information on skills and training needed for over 1,000 jobs. Go to the “Career” tab and type in the career in which you are interested.
- Find out about transferable skills – skills that you’ve learned in one field that are applicable to another – at [www.quintcareers.com](http://www.quintcareers.com) and [www.careerplanning.about.com](http://www.careerplanning.about.com).
- Skills Canada ([www.skillscanada.com](http://www.skillscanada.com)) has plenty of information about the skilled trades Canada needs such as electricians, plumbers, carpenters and mechanics.





## Informational Interviews

- An **informational interview** is a great way to get information about a particular job or field. Call an employer not for a job, but for an informational interview to ask questions about a field that you're interested in. It isn't a job interview. It's a chance for you to ask questions and get an insider's perspective about an industry or type of job so you can find out if it's something in which you have an interest. You can find out about what education or training is needed, what employers are looking for and whether the industry or organization is growing. Knowing these things can give you an edge when you write a cover letter or go for a job interview later on. If you make a good impression, your name may be passed along for consideration when a manager is hiring (see the section on *Making a Good First Impression* on p. 12.)
- **Preparing for the interview:**
  - Ask for 20 minutes of someone's time and stick to it. Don't be late and don't run long. Research the industry to prepare a list of questions. Stay on topic. Remember that you aren't there to ask for a job.
- **Sample questions:**
  - How do people normally break into the field?
  - What skills and personal qualities are important?
  - What do you do in a typical day?
  - What do you enjoy most/least?
  - What is the typical salary range?
  - Where do you see the industry heading in the next five years?
  - Is there anyone else you think I should speak with to gather more information?
  - Is there anything we haven't discussed that you feel might be important?
- **Follow-up:**
  - Send a thank-you note or email the day after the interview. Keep the information you gathered and use it the next time you meet someone in that field.

# Identifying Your Skills and Characteristics

Before you begin contacting employers, you have to be able to tell them what you have to offer. That starts with identifying your skills and characteristics.

## Essential and Transferable skills:

Essential skills are the basic skills needed for work, learning and life.

Transferable skills are those that you learned through school, jobs, volunteer work, hobbies, sports and other experiences that can be used in your next job or new career. In addition to being useful to individuals changing careers, transferable skills are also important to those who are facing a layoff, new graduates who are looking for their first jobs, and those re-entering the workforce after an extended absence.

## Examples of Essential and Transferable Skills:

- Communication skills: the ability to read, write, listen and speak
- Numerical skills: the ability to count, calculate, measure, estimate and budget
- Decision-making/Problem-solving skills: the ability to think about a problem and make good choices to solve it
- Learning skills: the ability to keep learning throughout life, be self-directed and consider mistakes as opportunities to learn
- Creative skills: the ability to think of new ways to do or make things
- Teamwork skills: the ability to work well with other people, meet deadlines and be trustworthy
- Personal management skills: the ability to adapt, cope, recognize stress and handle it, maintain your health, be persistent, flexible, tolerant and self-reliant
- Physical skills: the ability to handle physical tasks such as lifting and carrying, stamina and endurance

### Personality traits/Soft skills

These are the unique characteristics that you have. They may include:

- Positive attitude
- Concern for quality
- Leadership
- Dependable/punctual
- Initiative/independence
- Creativity
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Flexibility
- Organized

### Job-specific skills

These are the particular skills that are required for a job. They may include:

- Computer skills
- Financial/bookkeeping
- Food service
- Labour/trades
- Ability to lift
- Languages
- Customer service
- Mechanical abilities
- Driving/forklift
- Math/cash

## How to Develop New Skills

During your research, you may discover that you want to develop new skills or polish those you already have so you can be more competitive. There are a couple of ways you can do this.

### A. Volunteering

If you've been out of the workforce for several years or don't have any Canadian work experience, volunteering may be for you. As an OW participant, volunteering can be part of your approved employment plan. You can volunteer in a not-for-profit organization up to a maximum of 70 hours per month. It is important to discuss any volunteer placement you are considering with your case worker as the placement needs to be approved prior to starting. Funds may be available to assist with costs that you may face during your involvement in a volunteer placement.

Volunteering:

- Helps you develop skills and qualities you'll need on the job
- Offers current Canadian work experience to put on your resumé
- Builds self-confidence and helps to improve skills like time management
- Allows you to ease into the workforce
- Broadens your networking circle
- Provides references when you apply for employment

### B. Training programs or workshops

Additional skills can be acquired by enrolling in:

- Academic upgrading
- Continuing education
- Industry specific training programs
- Online courses



# Marketing Yourself

## Marketing Yourself to Employers

You've done your research, figured out what kind of job you're looking for and identified the skills that are needed and those you have to offer. Now you're ready to apply for work.

### What is the Hidden Job Market?

Did you know that only 10 per cent of vacant jobs are advertised in newspapers or on the Internet; five per cent are filled through resumés received by mass mailing to unspecified employers and 10 per cent are filled through recruitment agencies.

The remaining 75 per cent of job vacancies are hidden.

The hidden job market includes jobs that have not yet been advertised and are only found through active job searching. If you seek out these jobs, there is less competition for you. To find these jobs:

- Research a company's information through business directories or websites
- Make cold calls
- Attend informational interviews
- Network through relatives, friends and volunteering

### Job Search Tips

- Look beyond newspapers and the Internet.
- Tell everyone you talk to that you are looking for a job.
- Be ready to summarize your skills and experience in 30 seconds (see the section on *Your Elevator Pitch* on p. 7).
- Research and approach organizations that you would like to work for.
- Use job search websites or register with an employment agency (or two).
  - NOTE: A legitimate employment agency should never ask you to pay to sign-up.
- Prepare each resumé and cover letter to be specific to each job.
- Keep track of all the companies and people you send your resumé to. It will help to have something to refer to when you're called for an interview.
- Keep track of your contacts for networking opportunities (see sample tracker in the back pocket of this handbook)
- If you have to leave a phone message, speak clearly, don't rush and state the reason for your call. Say something about your qualifications that might generate interest and mention the name of the person who referred you, if applicable.
- Have a professional voice mail message on your phone. Make it a basic, friendly message without music, children's voices or the sound of television in the background.

## Your Elevator Pitch

It is a good idea to put together a script outlining your objective, a brief summary of personal traits and skills, and your contact information. You will need to engage the interest of the person on the other end of the phone or standing in front of you within 30 seconds. Mention your name, your skills, experience and accomplishments and why you are interested in their company. If the contact is being made through a reference, be sure to mention that person's name.

Don't read the script. Practice your script until it flows naturally. Remember to smile. Even on the phone, a smile comes through in your voice.

## Cold Calling

A cold call is reaching out to an employer where you wish to find work although they may not be advertising any job openings.

Check out the websites of companies that you're interested in. If they have a careers page, you may find information on jobs, salaries and benefits. LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) is also a very useful research tool. You may be able to find the name of a contact to cold call.

When calling a potential employer, try to get the name of the person you need to speak with. You may be able to find this on the company website, on LinkedIn or in a business directory. Try to speak with a manager or supervisor in the department you'd like to work in.

## Networking

Remember that networking happens anywhere, anytime and with anyone.

Think of yourself as a salesperson and sell your experience, your skills and your ability to get things done. Through networking and seeking the opinions of people in your field, you learn about career opportunities that aren't advertised.

- Tell everyone you know that you are looking for work: friends, relatives, neighbours, former co-workers and employers. They may know of some job leads in their company and may be able to give you names of individuals to cold call.
- Visit job fairs and attend networking events. Go dressed for an interview and bring several copies of your resumé that have a general objective statement. Get business cards and send a follow-up email to the contacts you make at the job fair.
- Become active in the hidden job market. Learn about the companies in your community and learn about the connections you can make. Call on companies that you would like to work for and be prepared to sell yourself in 30 seconds (see the section above on *Your Elevator Pitch*) to catch the interest of the person you are speaking to.



## Calling Card

A calling card ranges in size from a traditional business card to a postcard and can be either single or double-sided. You use these when networking. It lists important information about your job objective, experience and top skills. Any office supply store can print these cards for a reasonable price.

You should carry a supply of these cards with you to give to everyone you meet who may be able to make a contact for you that could lead to a job or an informational interview.

### Jane Smith

*111 Any St., Anywhere, ON L0L 1L0*  
*905-888-8888*

**Email:** janesmith@gmail.com

**Objective:** To obtain a challenging and responsible position as an Administrative Assistant.

#### Skills/Achievements

- Over seven years of experience in diverse customer service environments
- Proficient with MS Office Suite, Windows 2007
- Self-motivated, resourceful and willing to accept challenges
- Proven ability to work as part of a team
- Positive, professional attitude
- Committed to excellence



# Starting Your Job Search

## Preparing for Your Job Search

- Make sure everyone you live with knows you are looking for work and that you would appreciate it if they answered the telephone politely and took written messages for you.
- Have a pen, notebook and calendar available to you.
- Sign up for a free email address (e.g. [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com), [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com) or [www.yahoo.ca](http://www.yahoo.ca)).
- Use an appropriate and professional email address.
- Speak to your worker about how you can access free voice mail.
- Make sure your voice mail message is short and professional.
- Check your telephone messages often and return all messages within 24 hours.
- When you leave a message for an employer, speak slowly and clearly, identify your name, the position you are inquiring about and your contact information.

## Resumés

### Tips for Success

- Carefully check your cover letter and resumé for grammar and spelling. Don't rely on spell check and have someone you trust read it over.
- Include your current phone number and email address on each page.
- Include an objective heading that states in one or two sentences, what job you are applying for and the qualifications you have to offer the employer.
- Change your resumé to suit the position you are applying for.
- Use Times New Roman font in 11 or 12 point.
- Use bullets to emphasize key points.
- Use good quality white paper.
- Be accurate and honest about dates, skills, education and work history.
- There are many types of resumés. Functional and chronological resumés are the most commonly used.

### Things to Avoid

- Personal information such as age, marital status, appearance or social insurance number.
- The phrase "References Available on Request" - employers assume you have references.
- Including your "Hobbies and Interests" unless they relate to the job you are applying for.
- Short forms that are specific to a trade or profession.
- Having more than two pages.

## Functional Resumé

A functional resumé emphasizes your skills, education, experience and accomplishments, but places little emphasis on job history. See examples of resúmes in the back pocket of this handbook. The functional type of resumé is particularly useful if you are making a career change or you don't have recent or a continuous record of employment.

Always start with an "Objective Statement". Next, you can include a "Profile" or "Summary of Qualifications" that provides a summary (four to five bullets) of your top skills, qualities, education and special knowledge that match the job description. This section should relate directly to the qualifications outlined in the job description. This is your chance to motivate the employer to read the rest of the resumé.

You can also include some summaries made up of two to four skill areas under a heading titled "Relevant Experience and Skills". This is where you group your tasks, duties, skills and accomplishments from all of your jobs, volunteer, educational experiences and personal home life into skill areas. Make sure you use action words (refer to the **Action Words for Your Resumé** list in the back pocket of this handbook). Some examples of skill areas/categories are: customer service, office support, organization and planning, leadership, labour and trades, and food service.

You should include an "Education" heading if you have a high school diploma or higher. If your education is relevant to the position you are applying for, it should be on the first page near the beginning of the resumé. If you have the education for the job you are applying for but no experience, it should also be the first thing on your resumé. You can expand this section to "Education and Training/Professional Development" to include courses, workshops and seminars.

Under the heading "Work Experience" you can briefly outline the job titles, companies and locations where you have worked. Dates are always preferred but if you haven't worked in many years or have long gaps in your work history, you may want to leave the dates off the resumé.

Use a functional resumé if you:

- Don't have much work experience
- Have large gaps in your job history
- Have a variety of roles in your job history
- Gained most of your experience by working for the same company for years
- Are making a career change

## Chronological Resumé

The chronological resumé summarizes your education and work experience starting with the most recent and working backwards in time. This type is the most common and easiest to write. There is a sample included in the back pocket of this handbook.

In many cases, it's the format employers prefer, but it doesn't work for everyone. For example, if you have held many jobs for short periods, a chronological resumé makes it appear that you job hop and aren't very dedicated to your employers.



## Cover Letters

A cover letter makes your first impression with an employer. It highlights your skills, qualifications and relevant experience. Many employers say that they eliminate a job candidate based on the quality and significance of their cover letter. There are two cover letter samples in the back pocket of this handbook.

### Steps for a Great Cover Letter

- Check your cover letter carefully for grammar and spelling errors—have someone else read it.
- Keep it to three to four paragraphs, one page maximum.
- Create a heading with your contact information including address, phone number, email so an employer can reach you.
- Create a new cover letter for each job that you apply to. Clearly outline the job you are applying for and how you found out about it. Include today's date and the company's mailing address.
- Find out whom you are addressing the letter to and include a salutation. For example, "Dear Mr. or Ms. (NAME)". If unable to find a contact name use "Attention Human Resources Department or Manager or Department Supervisor."
- Refer to information you found through researching the company to grab the employer's attention and demonstrate your interest.
- Write about your skills, qualifications and experience as they relate to the job. Use relevant examples in a professional and enthusiastic manner. Don't just repeat information from your resumé.
- Always use a cover letter.

### First Paragraph

- Start off with a statement that will grab the employer's attention. For example, can your company use someone with (number) years of experience in (field of work)?
- Restate the job title and how you found out about the job opportunity.

### Second Paragraph

- Demonstrate that you have researched the company by including a general comment about what you have learned. If possible, compare a fact or value of that company with something of your own.

### Third Paragraph

- State your skills, qualifications and relevant work experience. Use simple, but clear sentences. Don't repeat your resumé information. This is a chance to highlight your accomplishments. Use phrasing from the job posting, if you are responding to an ad.
- Match your skills with those required for the position.

### Fourth Paragraph

- Thank the employer for taking the time to review your resumé and request action.
- Indicate that you will follow up.
- End the letter with a closing (e.g. Sincerely, Thank you, Respectfully yours). Type your name. Sign above your typed name if you are sending your application by mail.

# Interviews

## Are You Ready to Interview?

Once you have been selected for a job interview, it's important to prepare properly. Here are some tips to help you.

Research the company and the position. Learn as much as you can about the company, its services, products, customers and competition. The more you know about the company and what it stands for, the better chance you have of responding to questions and selling yourself.

Try to think ahead about the questions that might be asked. Consider your proudest accomplishment, your strengths/weaknesses, how you handle stress, etc. Employment resource centres and libraries have many books on interviews.

Be prepared and punctual. Check public transit schedules and directions. Plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. Allow time for traffic delays and to find the interview location.

Bring a copy of your resumé (even if you have already submitted one), a separate sheet with your references listed, copies of reference letters (if you have any), and a pen and paper for taking notes. If the job requires special training or education, be prepared to provide proof. Be sure to have your diplomas, degrees and certificates with you.

If the interviewer offers his/her hand, give a firm handshake, make eye contact and smile.

During the interview, you may be asked if you have a criminal conviction for which a pardon has not been issued. Answer this question honestly. If you have ever been fingerprinted by the police, you may have a criminal record even if you weren't convicted or sentenced. If the criminal charge did not relate to assault, theft or fraud you can say so. You are still bondable in this case. The employer may be willing to hire you if your criminal record was for something that would not be related to the requirements of the job.

Listen carefully to the questions. It is fine to ask the interviewer to repeat or rephrase the question. A few seconds of silence before answering is acceptable. Be clear and concise in your answers. Whenever possible, use work, school and volunteering examples instead of personal life examples. Do not talk about your personal life, problems, barriers or past employers in a negative context.

Be prepared to ask some questions to confirm your interest in the job and the company.

## Making a Good First Impression

First impressions make an impact. When going to an interview or meeting prospective employer, dress professionally in clean, well-pressed clothing. A neutral pair of slacks or a knee-length skirt with a collared blouse for women and a pair of slacks with a collared shirt for men is suitable to all types of interviews. For professional level positions, a blazer, jacket or cardigan should be added. Be sure your shoes are clean and in good repair. Remove your hat. Make sure you are well-groomed (showered, shaven, clean hair, teeth and fingernails). Keep your jewelry small and basic. Remove all piercings other than one simple earring in each ear. Avoid wearing fragrances and smoking just before your meeting.

Offer a firm handshake, smile and make eye contact. During the interview be aware of the interviewer's body language and try to mirror it. If they are leaning forward on the desk, you do the same. If they



are sitting back in their chair, do that. Have neat, clean copies of your resumé, references and any other pertinent paperwork such as your diploma, certificate, degree, accreditation documents or work samples in a folder ready to present.

### Questions an employer cannot ask during an interview

An employer may not ask you questions about your race, ethnic origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, children, health record or your Social Insurance Number (referred to as "SIN"). Once an employment offer is made, you will need to provide your SIN to the employer. It is illegal for an employer to discriminate against you for any of the reasons listed as well as colour, mental/physical disability and gender.

More information is available at the Ministry of Labour at 1-800-532-5551 or [www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca)

If you are asked these types of questions, here are some sample answers you may use.

#### Q. Are you married/do you have children?

(The employer may be wondering if you will have to rush out at exactly quitting time every day or if you will be taking a lot of time off to care for sick children.)

A. In my past jobs I have always stayed within the acceptable attendance standards by making alternate arrangements for sick dependents. I would be flexible to work some overtime if it is necessary in special circumstances.

#### Q. What is your religion?

A. I do not require any special accommodation for time off work outside of regular statutory holidays.

OR

If I needed specific days off outside of statutory holidays, I understand they would be taken as vacation days according to your company policy.

#### Q. How old are you?

A. I feel my experience speaks for itself and will benefit your organization (for an older worker).

I am of legal age to take employment and hold a valid Social Insurance Number (for a younger worker).

## Questions you can ask at the end of an interview:

- How would you describe the responsibilities and specific duties of this position?
- Why is the position vacant?
- What are the most important attributes for a person to be successful in this position?
- If I am presented with this job offer, how soon would you like me to start?
- Would you like a copy of my reference list?

## References

Be prepared to provide appropriate references at every job interview. Ideally, references should be people that you know professionally rather than personally, such as:

- Former employers
- Former co-workers
- Lawyers, teachers, accountants
- Supervisors in a volunteer placement
- Persons in an association, council, chamber of commerce
- Sports team coaches
- Landlords
- Clergy

If you are going to use a person as a reference, be sure to contact them to get their permission first and make sure they are willing to provide a favourable reference. Prepare a one-page, typed sheet containing the name, affiliation and contact information for three to four references. This page should not accompany your resumé but should be handed over to an employer if it is requested at a job interview.

## After the interview

- Send the interviewer a message to thank them for their time and to tell them again why you feel you would be an excellent candidate for the position. This will help you stand out in their mind. You can send a note, email or telephone message.
- Employers expect a thank you so it is essential that you follow-up promptly.

A sample of a thank-you letter can be found at the back of this handbook.



# Newcomers to Canada

Canada offers many opportunities for newcomers in its skilled labour market. This section gives you answers to specific questions that newcomers may have although all of the information in this guide is useful for anyone looking for a job.

## What you need when looking for a job in Ontario

- Work permit—contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Social insurance number (SIN)—for more information, go to [www.workingincanada.gc.ca](http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca)
- Permanent resident card
- Educational diplomas, degrees and certificates. In Canada, each occupation requires various skills, education and training. It is helpful to get your education assessed (see **Accreditation Information** in the back pocket of this handbook) because employers look highly upon candidates who meet Canadian standards
- Trade or professional certifications, qualifications
- Career portfolio—this provides examples of your current skills, qualifications, certifications, references and work experience in an organized folder
- Letters of recommendation
- Ability to communicate effectively in English

## Enrolling in English as a Second Language Training

The English as a Second Language training course, known as ESL or LINC is for newcomers whose first language is not English. These courses help you to learn English reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Enhanced language courses provide advanced, specialized vocabulary for specific professions.

For information about the available English language classes in your area, refer to the **Newcomers Resource** list in the back pocket of this handbook.

Ask your employment specialist at Ontario Works for more information.

## Welcome Centres

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services provide a one-stop service designed to guide and help immigrants to understand the information and resources available in York Region. Services are provided free of charge. Welcome Centres employ helpful staff who speak many languages and can help newcomers with settlement, language, job search, friendship and other issues. To contact a Welcome Centre, call 1-877-761-1155 or email [info@welcomecentre.ca](mailto:info@welcomecentre.ca). There is a list of Welcome Centre locations in the back pocket of this handbook.





## Mentorship

Mentorship is a way for internationally educated professionals to learn information related to their profession in Canada. Finding out about accreditation, licensing and labour market trends as well as being matched to a mentor within the same field are all benefits of mentoring. A mentor may provide guidance and coaching around sector-specific skills, communication and employment.

One of the challenges a newcomer may face is developing a network of professional contacts. Mentorship may help you develop contacts so you can move forward with employment-related goals. A number of organizations offer mentoring programs and help with matching individuals to a suitable mentor.

## Finding Work in Your Sector

Ontario Bridge Training Programs: The Ontario government has developed programs that can help newcomers get their licence or certificate in their profession or trade. Each program is different and may provide you with:

- An assessment of your education and skills (see **Accreditation Information** listed in the back pocket of this handbook)
- A clinical or workplace experience
- Skills training or targeted academic training programs
- Preparation for a licence or certification examination
- Language training for your profession or trade
- Individual learning plans to identify any added training you may need

For a list of Bridge Training Programs, visit [www.credentials.gc.ca](http://www.credentials.gc.ca). Contact your OW worker to discuss whether participation in one of the Bridge Training Programs would be an approved activity under OW policies. Contact your professional association to determine what they require from you to register as a member.

You can also gain additional experience through co-operative placements and volunteering at a non-profit organization. For more information, refer to the **Employment Resource Services** list in the back pocket of this handbook and speak to your worker.

# Mature Workers

If you are an older job seeker and concerned that your age is working against you in your job search, find ways to shift the emphasis away from your age and toward your ability to make tangible contributions. Consider the following:

- Join the board of a professional association and then work to demonstrate your skills to the membership.
- Seek a consulting or volunteer role that will provide you with the opportunity to achieve measurable results and enable you to build relationships with a wider network of people. As you become perceived as a valuable team member, your age will seem less relevant.

## Keep Your Skills Current

Older workers may be perceived as having skills that are out-of-date. Keep your skills current by:

- Upgrading your computer skills.
- Registering for a social networking site such as *LinkedIn*, *Twitter* or *Facebook*.
- Effectively using the Internet for searching jobs and employers.
- Posting your resumé online and emailing job applications with attachments.

## Research

- Research local labour markets and find out what sectors are stable and growing.
- Look at websites for employers that you would like to work for. What are some of the key trends happening now? What innovations are shaping the future in the industry?
- "Learning the lingo" is also crucial. Know and understand key concepts and buzzwords so you can effectively use them in your applications and interviews.
- Read the job description very carefully and use the same words in your own application.

## Marketing Your Experience

It is critical for older job hunters to be able to talk about how their past experience will be of value to an employer.

- Show how your qualifications will be an asset. Older workers tend to have the qualities that employers are looking for like problem-solving skills, business savvy, loyalty, and social and leadership skills. It's simply a matter of marketing your skills.
- Take time to use these positive traits to your advantage by listing accomplishments and concrete examples of skills from your experience. Then use this list to help you demonstrate how you'll help make the company a success moving forward.
- Remember: You're selling the future, not the past.





## Resumé

One way to overcome the perception that your age is an issue is to age-proof and edit your resumé.

- Limiting what you include on your resumé, from a chronological perspective, can help job seekers avoid the stigma of being considered too old by a prospective employer.
- Listing courses, workshops, seminars and networking events that you have attended, not only show employers that you are current, but demonstrates motivation, commitment, ability and willingness to learn.
- Focusing on skills and accomplishments relevant to the job you are looking for is preferable to focusing on dates. That way you can highlight the skills that the employer is looking for without having to list all of your skills and work experience. Leave dates out altogether or have two headings: **Relevant Experience** and **Other Experience**. Don't include high school or college graduation dates.

## Appearance

Appearances matter and looking the part is essential for workers of all ages. However, older workers may face age bias when employers are looking for energy and enthusiasm. Outdated styles and worn-out clothing and shoes can add years to your appearance.

Keep your look up-to-date.

- Update your hairstyle. Go to a salon for a free consultation and look at magazines for inspiration.
- Keep makeup subtle so it enhances your features. Stick with neutral colours.
- Be sure your glasses are a current style and colour.
- Well-fitting clothing and shoes are important. They must be clean, pressed, polished and in good repair. Magazines such as **Zoomer** and **More** are a good resource for fashion tips directed at the mature individual.

# Starting a Job

## Congratulations! You have a job!

Contact your case worker right away to let them know you have started a new job. Your case worker will ask you to provide an employment letter or some other written confirmation of your employment.

Depending on your earnings, you may continue to qualify for OW assistance. Make sure you continue to submit your Income Reporting Statement and declare your earnings along with a copy of your pay stubs.

If you will be working full time you may be eligible for a one-time benefit, depending on what you need to start your new job, such as the cost of uniforms, safety equipment, tools, etc.

If you no longer qualify for Ontario Works because of your earnings, you may still be eligible to receive benefits for up to six months, which could include a drug card, dental and vision care. These benefits could only be available if your employer is not offering them.

### Workplace Standards in Ontario

In Ontario, all employers must meet workplace standards. These standards ensure that the workplace is safe, fair, productive and healthy for employers and employees. There are standards for many aspects of the workplace, including:

- Hours of work
- Minimum wage
- Overtime pay
- Wage statements
- Pregnancy leave
- Public holidays
- Safety
- Equal pay for men and women

You can visit [www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca) to learn more about employment standards.



## Keeping Your New Job

### Plan for Emergencies

If you normally drive to work, get familiar with the public transit routes and schedules in case your car breaks down. You could also find a co-worker who lives near you and arrange to carpool.

If you have children, arrange for back-up child care with a trusted neighbour or relative in case your child is too sick to go to school or his/her regular child care centre.

Attendance is very important, especially in the initial probation period. If you are very sick and can't go to work, be sure to call your employer and provide as much notice as possible. Your employer may require a doctor's note when you return.

### Get Familiar with the Policies in Your Workplace

Is there a designated smoking area? Can you take a short break at any time to have a cigarette or only leave your work station at designated times?

Can you use the phone or computer for personal matters on your breaks? You should only make or receive personal phone calls at work in an emergency.

Is there a dress code? Watch how co-workers and supervisors dress in the workplace. If you are unsure, ask for a copy of the dress code.

Many organizations have policies on workplace harassment. If you are having trouble with a co-worker, continue to treat the person with professionalism and respect. Approach your supervisor to discuss the problem.

### Ask Questions

- If you are unsure how to use the tools or technology of your job, ask for some additional training. If you are struggling with some aspect of your work, set aside time to talk to your supervisor and discuss additional training time such as following or "shadowing" a more experienced worker. You could suggest being assigned a mentor (see *Mentorship* on p. 16) for the first three months as a way for you to feel comfortable asking questions and asking for help.

### Maintain Perfect Punctuality and Attendance

Arrive at work a few minutes before your start time so you can be at your desk or work area and ready to start work on time. Check the weather each evening to plan ahead for bad weather conditions. Try your best to arrange your personal appointments outside of work hours. Many professionals have evening or early morning appointments. Sleep, exercise and a healthy diet help to reduce stress and stay healthy so you can be at work every day.

### Any Questions?

Ontario Works is here to assist you to navigate your way to employment. Do not hesitate to contact your case worker with any questions you may have. Remember, we are here to help!

Good luck on your job hunt!