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Career Placement Handbook Non-Ordained Ministry

Produced for use by students and alumni of Westminster Theological Seminary

Part One treats strategies by which to approach the job search.

Part Two leads through the steps normally taken while job hunting.

Begin at whichever section you find most helpful!

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Part One

The Christian Calling

What does it mean to look for a job as a Christian? This question is especially relevant when looking for a job in a secular field. We must keep in mind what our focus should be in any endeavor but especially in matters of employment.

The Call to Work. As early as Genesis, we see that God has a plan for humanity. Adam was tasked with the care and upkeep of the garden. Work, then, is not a curse, nor is it a result of the fall; rather, work is part of our purpose as stewards of God's creation. We should approach job hunting in the same way we would the job itself, with diligence and patience. We must be faithful to do our part in the job hunt while at the same time relying on God and trusting that His plan is best.



Individual Calling. Each member of the body of Christ has a function and a purpose. God has a calling for you. Your calling is a place that will allow you to exercise what God has given you by virtue of creation and providence in service to him and others.

Sovereignty of God. It is easy, especially in times of economic downturn, to forget God's role in our lives. Yet, as Christians, we affirm that God has a plan for each of us; this statement is no less true of our vocation. God has work set aside just for you. This truth is comforting for Christians because it means that God will lead us with respect to matters of vocation. Beginning your job hunt with this powerful truth in mind will help you to weather the highs and lows of job hunting.

Prayerful Consideration. Vitally important to any undertaking is prayer. We must be vigilant to petition the Lord for His guidance in obtaining employment. We must also approach any job we obtain with prayer and rely on the Lord to bless our endeavors.

Fellowship of Believers. Part of the joy of being a Christian is membership in a community of others who love Christ. Make sure to keep in mind that your job hunt is a communal effort; your family, friends, pastor, professors, and others all want you to find work God has for you. You have a large network of brothers and sisters in Christ who can both pray for you and help you prosper in God's ways.

Choosing a Career

Before obtaining employment, an obvious step is knowing for what you're looking. The information within this section will give you a better idea of the resources available to help you identify careers suited to your personality and gifts.

Mentored Ministry. Mentored Ministry is a Westminster program that helps M.Div. students test their gifts and calling as well as gain practical experience in a given field or ministry. It provides opportunity for M.Div. students not only to mature as a Christian but also to make important contacts that can aid in finding employment once you graduate. For an introduction to Mentored Ministry, reference the

Westminster's [student knowledgebase](https://students.wts.edu/students/services/employment.html?list) or current academic catalog. Mentored ministry opportunities, including internships, which outside churches and organizations wish to make known to Westminster students may be found here: <https://students.wts.edu/students/services/employment.html?list>

Gifts. It is important to keep in mind during your job search that the Lord has endowed you with gifts and talents for use in the furtherance of His kingdom. Discerning your gifts is not necessarily easy, but doing so will help you in your search. For instance, if you have a hard time explaining concepts to others, teaching may not be one of your gifts. If you enjoy writing and editing, perhaps the Lord has a career centered around those strengths for you. Ways to discern your gifts include prayer, conversation with a pastor, church members and professors; reflection on ministry experience; or completing a gifts and/or talents inventory.

Personality. Not every job will be a good fit for your personality. To help find jobs that are best suited to your personality type, it might be worthwhile to take a personality test. This test will help you to get a better idea of where your natural aptitudes and professional inclinations lie as well as what types of jobs you will likely find satisfying. A personality test may also prove helpful in suggesting career options that you have not previously considered. Keep in mind, however, that such tests are not based on Christian assumptions for the most part, and so you should use them with discretion. The link below allows you to see assessment tests that are available to help gauge your skill set and interests. Some of these assessments may charge a fee for test results.

<https://www.thebalance.com/free-career-personality-and-aptitude-tests-2059811>

Skills. Your skills are another aspect of job hunting. Having a particular skill, especially if it is in high demand, can substantially benefit your job hunt. Yet, it can be difficult to determine which skills you possess and which ones will be most valuable. The following government website is a great tool for helping you analyze which skills you have. Not only does this site assist you in compiling a list of your skills and identifying which skills are marketable, but it also helps match your particular skills with jobs. <https://www.careerinfonet.org/skills/default.aspx>

Helpful Books. The following books may be helpful in choosing a career:

Clark, Martin E. *Choosing Your Career: The Christian's Decision Manual*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1981.

Lore, Nicholas. *The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Mattson, Ralph T., and Arthur F. Miller. *Finding a Job You Can Love*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999.

Parrot, Leslie. *Contemporary Christian Counseling, Vol. 11: The Career Counselor*. Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.

Counsel. Another important consideration when deciding on career is the advice that people close to you can offer.

Westminster's Resources. Talk to Student Development staff regarding your employment hunt. Not only may they help advise you, they may have job leads to offer as well. Also make sure to speak with professors whose counsel you value.

Friends/Family. Your family and friends probably know you best. They can shed light on skills and passions you may not even realize you possess. Make sure to speak to them regarding your career pursuit; they may offer invaluable advice.

Pastor. Your pastor is another person to speak with regarding employment as well as someone who can pray for your job hunt. Let your pastor know that you are looking and ask for advice.

Christian Mentors. Sunday school teachers, professors, deacons and elders, and other Christian mentors are another great resource to consider when seeking Christian counsel on employment.

Career Counselors. Another option to consider when evaluating career objectives is to speak with a professional career counselor. Career counselors have tools that can enhance your job hunt, and they can make suggestions for careers that you could find satisfying. *Be prepared to pay a fee (sometimes substantial) for these services.*

Local Career Counselor: One option to consider is to seek the services of a local career counselor. Meeting face-to-face with a professional counselor may give you the guidance and direction you need to find the right job.

Online Career Counselor: Several sites offer online or telecounseling for a fee. This option is a great resource if you are not sure about where you want to live and work.

Personal Reflection Take some time to reflect on your reasons for coming to seminary and the goals you had identified for your time at Westminster. What did you want to do after graduation? How does your degree from Westminster facilitate your goals? Talk with trusted others and counselors as suggested above about your reflections.

Finding Open Positions

Once you have a good idea of what type of job you are seeking, it's time to find open positions. In this section, we will explore resources and tools available to help you locate available jobs.

Prayer. The best way to begin a job hunt is to pray! Pray for the Lord's guidance in finding jobs and for direction in deciding for which jobs to apply. Maintaining a Christian attitude in such a turbulent process is not easy, but it helps to keep your focus on the Lord and to remember why you are working in the first place.

Networking. Once you've begun your job hunt, it is imperative to let people know that you're looking! A friend may know a friend who can help you find a job. Getting the word out to friends, relatives, professors/teachers, and church members is a great start.

Westminster

Mentored Ministry: If you've done Mentored Ministry, utilize the contacts you have made during your Mentored Ministry work. You may be able to obtain employment at the church or organization where you served. If that is not a possibility, your mentor(s) might be able to provide you with job leads as well as let others know of your interest in employment. If you have done an excellent job in your Mentored Ministry work, your mentor(s) will likely be eager to assist as possible in your employment hunt.

Contacts within the Community: Let Student Development staff know of your job hunt and the type of position for which you are looking. They may be able to provide job leads to you. Let professors with whom you are close, as well as fellow students and other members of the Westminster community, know that you are seeking employment. After your time at Westminster, keep in touch with such people. Keeping in touch will allow you to network later on in life, providing both opportunities for you to find employment and for you to help others.

Alumni: Westminster alumni were once in the same position you are now. Contact the Dean of Students to see how you may connect with alumni.

Christian Communities

Church: Your home church may have a list of jobs available. Sometimes these notifications are on a bulletin board or available elsewhere. Ask your pastor to direct you to these resources.

Internships/Volunteering: If you have interned or volunteered somewhere during your time at Westminster, or even before you started at Westminster, make sure to let the organization for which you worked know that you are looking for a job. Perhaps that particular organization has an opening or can refer you to another organization that is hiring.

Professional Networking

Alumni Associations: Often alumni will hire others who attended the same undergraduate school. Many schools have alumni associations that encourage graduates to keep in contact and help each other out. Sometimes there are regional alumni associations that help graduates find jobs in a specific geographical area. Check out the alumni association of your undergraduate institution to see what resources might be available to you. Let former professors (especially those who may have recommended you previously) and old friends know that you are looking for employment as well.

Former Jobs: If you have remained in touch with former employers or organizations where you volunteered or interned, let them know you are looking for employment. This measure is especially important if the organization has multiple locations nationwide.

Networking Websites

Facebook: Using Facebook is another way to let people know that you are looking for a job. You can also use Facebook to network with people who are working for a company you'd like to work for as well.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is a free service that facilitates professional relations. It allows you to post information about yourself so that potential employers and other contacts are aware of your résumé and abilities. You can also create and maintain a contact list of people you know who are on the site, too.

Twitter: Twitter lets you keep in touch with current and former acquaintances so you can let others know about your need for a job. Just be careful that your twitter contains professional material (especially if you are twittering with your real name).

Blogging: A blog can be a great tool for employment. You can post information such as your résumé and writing samples for prospective employers to see. However, blogging can also have a detrimental effect if a prospective employer comes across offensive material or even something he or she dislikes. When

job hunting, and in general, it is important to be careful what you blog, especially if you are using your real name.

Institutional Placement. Many colleges have resources available exclusively to students and alumni; these resources can include job listings, résumé writing tips, guides for finding employment, and possibly even personal consultation. Institutional placement resources are a good place to begin your job hunt.

Westminster. Westminster has its own resources available to current students and alumni. A great tool for finding available jobs is to look at the Employment Opportunities section of the Westminster website. There, you will find job listings by churches and other organizations which want to hire Westminster graduates. <https://students.wts.edu/students/services/employment.html>. If people have posted there, they're desirous of WTS grads!

Undergraduate Alma Mater. Check with your alma mater to see what resources may be available to you.

The Internet. The Internet can be a powerful tool in your job hunt. There you can find vacant positions, tips on writing your résumé, and even message boards with postings by job hunters going through the same experience you are. However, be careful when using the Internet; scams promising great pay for little work abound. If a job posting asks for your personal information, such as social security number or date of birth, or your picture, avoid it! Some companies are unethical or undesirable for which to work; if you see the same listing posted week after week, it is probably best to avoid that company or organization. Keeping this in mind, you may find the Internet helpful to you in your job hunt.

Denominational Websites. The websites of different denominations are great places to look for employment. Often, they advertise non-ordained positions for which people with seminary degrees may be suited.

Christian Websites. These websites are geared specifically for Christians seeking employment. Many of the jobs available at these sites are pastoral positions, but parachurch and non-ordained positions advertised as well.

General/Ministry Jobs

- <http://www.christiancareercenter.com/>
- <https://www.christianjobs.com/>
- <https://www.christianet.com/christianjobs/>
- <https://www.churchjobs.net/>
- <https://www.churchstaffing.com/>
- <https://ministryjobs.com/>
- http://www.professionalchaplains.org/jobs_search.asp
- <https://www.youthpastor.com/jobs/>

Education Jobs

- Association of Christian Schools International: <https://www.acsi.org/school-services/career-center>
- Network of International Christian Schools: <http://www.nics.org/career-opportunities/>

- Christian college and university Jobs: <http://careers.cccu.org/jobs>

Missions

- PCA: Mission to the World: <https://www.mtw.org/serve>
- PCA: Mission to North America: <https://pcamna.org/>
- OPC: <http://www.opc.org/ministries.html>
- And other denominational and independent mission organizations

Parachurch Jobs

- Bethany Christian Services: <https://www.bethany.org/careers>
- Campus Crusade for Christ: <https://www.cru.org/us/en/opportunities.html>
- Christian Camp and Conference Association:
<https://www.ccca.org/assnfe/JobAppPortal.asp?MODE=VIEW>
- Christianity Today: <https://www.christianitytoday.org/careers/>
- Church Sports and Recreation Ministers: <http://www.csrn.org/jobs.html>
- Compassion International: <https://www.compassion.com/employment/christian-employment.htm>
- Family Life: <https://www.familylife.com/joinourteam>
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes: <http://teamfca.org/start-your-journey/>
- Focus on the Family: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/careers>
- Habitat for Humanity: <https://www.habitat.org/about/careers>
- InterVarsity: <https://intervarsity.org/get-involved/work-with-us?action>
- Prison Fellowship Ministries:
<https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/careers/employment/>
- Samaritan's Purse: <https://careers.samaritanspurse.org/>
- WORLD magazine: <https://world.wng.org/careers>
- World Vision: <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/job-opportunities>
- Wycliffe: <https://www.wycliffe.org/serve>
- Young Life: <https://www.younglife.org/Jobs/Pages/default.aspx>

Government Websites. Government jobs may provide a working situation ideal for you. Check out <https://www.usajobs.gov/> to see what positions are available but note that government jobs often take a while to obtain. Be prepared to wade through the documentation involved in landing a government job.

Other Websites. Another good way to find information about open positions in a given area is to check out websites.

Craigslist: Craigslist is a free, online classified website that allows local businesses to list available positions. When you are using the search engine, make sure to select the city closest to your target location. It is a great place to begin looking for employment as well as get a sense of salaries, types of companies hiring, and other information for a given location. While you're there, you can also find housing and other important regional information.

Online Classifieds: Looking at online classifieds such as those in job search engines may yield some results.

Direct Contact. Another strategy for finding open positions is to directly contact a company for which you wish to work. Effectively doing so can be as simple as keeping an eye on their website for listings or as complicated as calling and inquiring about open positions. In this area, persistence can certainly pay off.

Professional Conferences. Professional conferences such as the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) provide opportunities to meet dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people with theological backgrounds from many different organizations such as seminaries, publishers, publishing companies, and software companies. Often these conferences will provide opportunities for you to distribute your résumé. Make sure to bring several copies of your résumé as well as any business cards with your contact information so that you can keep in touch with prospective leads.

Local Seminaries. Seminaries can also be an excellent resource for finding jobs, particularly for someone with a theological degree. Google ones in the area in which you wish to settle.

Local Universities and Colleges. Take a look at the career websites which local universities and colleges maintain for their students. They are often accessible to the general public and can contain job postings not listed elsewhere. College and university websites can be an especially useful tool when looking for employment in a new geographical area. Keep in mind that the university also needs employees; a position there might be suited to your skills. Often universities will keep a separate list of internal openings, so be sure to search thoroughly.

Local Christian Schools. Local Christian elementary, middle, and high schools may be another avenue to look into when pursuing employment as someone with theological training. A great way to find Christian schools in your area which are hiring is to perform a simple search online and to check out the schools' websites or contact the school directly. Even if you are not interested in teaching, schools need support staff and other employees. Westminster's online job center has positions of this nature listed from time to time as well.

Job Fairs. Job fairs give you the opportunity to present yourself, in person, to dozens of potential employers. Attending a job fair may be the key to landing a great job, though keep in mind that many people at the fair will be vying for jobs (especially in fairs advertised publicly). Also, be sure to bring enough fresh copies of your résumé and cover letter to pass around. An Internet search, your undergraduate institution, and other universities may help to locate the job fairs in your area.

Women in Ministry

This section highlights a few of the options available to women with theological degrees. While a student, seek to tailor any ministry and volunteer experiences to your perceived calling and giftedness. Consult with Student Development staff to discuss your particular situation and explore the possibilities available to you.

Church Ministry. Even if you are not ordained, the Church may still be able to provide you with employment. Many churches have paid positions for children and youth ministries as well as women's ministries. Check out local churches in your area and the denominational websites listed in Chapter 3 to find these types of positions.

Parachurch Ministry. Parachurch ministries are Christian organizations that work to foster and promote faith in communities, nationally and abroad. Generally they are outside the purview of the church, though they may be supported by one or more churches. These types of organizations need people with many different skill sets and backgrounds. See the websites listed under “Parachurch Jobs” in Chapter 3 for potential leads, which may suggest others to you.

Counseling. Counseling students may find positions with parachurch ministries, in Christian schools, or on a church staff as a youth worker or director of women’s ministries. They may also obtain employment with campus organizations such as Reformed University Fellowship (RUF), Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO), Campus Crusade, and Intervarsity, or with a missionary organization. You may also contact counseling practices in your area to see if they have openings.

Missions. Women with degrees from Westminster have gone into missions, both in the U.S. and abroad. Having a theological degree further qualifies you to share God’s Word around the globe. If you sense a call to the mission field, it is important that you consult with trusted others, including your pastor and spiritual mentor(s) and Student Development staff. Wise Christians can help confirm your call to the mission field as well as direct you to the best mission organizations. Also be sure to check out the mission sites listed in the previous chapter under “Christian Websites” for some options to jumpstart your hunt.

Education. Another option for women with theological degrees is teaching. With a master’s degree you are usually qualified to teach at least at the community college level. You may also be able to obtain a position at a Christian university or private high school. To start, search online for and explore the websites of the local universities, colleges, and Christian schools in the area in which you wish to settle.

Administration. Churches, Christian schools, and other Christian (as well as non-Christian) companies need administrators. A theological degree will likely make you an attractive candidate for this type of position. Check out the websites of local churches; often they post openings online. Also be sure to look at the “Denominational Websites” section in Chapter 3 for administration positions within the churches of a particular denomination.

Seminary Staff. Seminaries also require staff to help run the school. Westminster itself often hires its own graduates to fill its roles. A seminary job can allow you to use your time at Westminster to help guide other students through their seminary education. Search online for and explore the websites of seminaries in the area in which you wish to settle.

Part Two

Initial Contact

Inquiry Letters and E-Mails. The first step in landing a job, once you've identified it, is contacting the employer to submit your credentials. This stage is crucial in the job hunt and requires a keen eye for detail. Sometimes a job listing will ask that the résumé and cover letter be sent along with your initial inquiry. Other listings will require several stages of contact before your résumé and cover letter are accepted. Be very careful to follow any submission instructions included in a job listing; failure to submit your credentials according to a listing's direction will likely disqualify you.

Types of Contact

Cold Contact: Much of the correspondence regarding open positions will involve cold contact. In other words, you will be communicating with employers without personally knowing them or someone who knows them. You will need to craft your inquiry accordingly.

Referral: One way to gain an advantage in an employment situation is by obtaining a referral. Obtaining a referral is partly why letting your friends and family know of your job hunt is so crucial. They may be able to mention your name to someone who is hiring. People who come recommended have a better chance of obtaining an interview and employment.

Phone Calls: Sometimes a job listing will include a phone number for you to call in order to begin the application process. Before calling, make sure you have a copy of the job description in front of you and that you have read it carefully so you can answer any potential questions up front. Also be sure to have your résumé and cover letter handy so you can quickly reference them if needed. Call during business hours, and make sure that when you call you are free from distractions and other noises (such as pets or children). If you are using your cell phone, be sure to call from an area that has good reception. Finally, have a pen and paper or your computer with you so you can take down any information you will need to proceed with the application.

Writing an Inquiry E-Mail

The goal of writing an inquiry e-mail is to motivate a potential employer to look at your résumé and cover letter. Take your time and make sure any correspondence that you send to a prospective employer—including e-mail—is written carefully.

An effective approach is to provide enough information to warrant a further look at your qualifications while not boring the reader with too much detail and not merely repeating what is in your résumé. A good way to achieve this is to highlight the most prominent and relevant experience you have had. For instance, if you are applying to be an English teacher at a secondary school, mention any previous, substantial teaching experience you have had. Your time working at McDonald's, however, should not be included in an inquiry e-mail.

Writing Tips

The following are some tips to get you started with writing an inquiry e-mail:

Address the responsible party. Whenever possible, include the name of a specific person or department mentioned in the job listing (i.e., "Mr. Jones," "Search Committee," or "Human Resources Department");

including the specific name is especially recommended if the contact person/body is mentioned in the job listing.

Name the position. Include in your first paragraph which position you are applying for and why.

Identify your contact. Mention the name of the person who referred you to the position (if applicable).

Mention your experience. In the body, briefly mention your most relevant experience for the position.

Express gratitude. In your closing paragraph, thank the reader for his or her time. Also indicate that you would like further communication regarding the position.

Use a complimentary closing. Include an ending greeting such as “Sincerely” or “Best Regards” as well as your name at the very end of your inquiry e-mail.

If submitting your credentials via regular mail, include your cover letter as the first piece and your résumé behind it. You need not include a separate inquiry letter.

Sample Inquiry E-Mail

Dear [Person’s Name or Position Title]:

Addressed to an actual person

I am writing to submit my credentials for the XX position advertised on XX. My experience and education uniquely qualifies me to make a positive contribution to your company, and I am excited about the prospect of working for you.

Names the position

Explains reason for applying

Attached to this e-mail, please find my cover letter and résumé, which highlight my education and experience. You will see that my position as XX has prepared me to XX. Furthermore, my time spent at XX as XX sharpened my people and communication skills.

Mentions your strongest and most relevant skills/experiences

Thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you further about this opportunity.

Best Regards,

Your Name

Résumés

The résumé is the most important document you will send to your potential employer. It has the power to determine the outcome of your employment endeavors, so take time to craft a compelling one! This

section contains guidance for writing your résumé along with sample résumés to give you an idea of what to do and what to avoid.

Please note that this section focuses on how to prepare a résumé. For suggestions and feedback on the content of your résumé, see Student Development staff.

Preparing Your Résumé

Ideally, you should have your résumé written before you need to send it to prospective employers. Be careful during this stage. If you turn in a sloppy or disorganized résumé, you are likely to have a much harder time gaining employment. If you turn in a clean, professional résumé that is well-written and sharply formatted, you stand a much better chance of gaining employment in the field of your choice.

During the process of writing, leave yourself enough time to complete your résumé in stages. Allowing time to elapse between drafts will help you catch mistakes and think of better ways to express yourself. When you are sure you have a finished product, ask at least one friend or family member to proofread it.

Guidelines

Keep your résumé to one page. Many employers today spend less than 30 seconds looking at each résumé. Some employers won't even look past the first page, especially if the position is highly desirable.

Use standard formatting. Make sure that your formatting is minimal, especially if you are planning on submitting your résumé electronically. Refrain from artistic effects. The goal should be to have your résumé look organized and simple, not cluttered and wordy. It is wise to use standard fonts (for example, Times New Roman or Arial) since utilizing fonts that an employer's computer does not have will result in transmission problems and hurt or possibly ruin your chances of gaining employment with that organization. If a particular file type is not requested in the job listing, send your résumé and cover letter as .pdf files.

Follow submission directions. Be sure to pay careful attention to any submission directions included in a job listing. Some employers will refuse to even open your résumé if it is not submitted according to their guidelines.

Sections to Include

Heading

Full Name

Address

E-mail: Make sure to use a professional-sounding e-mail address such as your first initial and last name, not one named after a pet, favorite television show, etc.

Phone Number

Professional Blog: Include only if relevant to a position for which you're applying. Do not include a personal blog.

Education

GPA: Generally, if your GPA is above 3.0, include it on your résumé. If you are short on space, you may consider leaving your GPA off. This determination should be made in light of the type of job for which you are applying.

Degrees: Include any degrees earned, your specialization, and date of graduation. Also note if you earned a minor or honors (such as *cum laude*). If you have a bachelor's degree, do not put high school information in this section.

Relevant Coursework: If you have taken courses that are relevant to a specific position (but outside of classes required for your major), you may consider including them.

Employment History

Include the most substantial employment you've had in this section. You may choose to organize your employment history chronologically or by most relevant and/or substantial job to least relevant.

The best way to describe your responsibilities in each job is to list them using bullet points. Use vivid verbs in well-structured statements (not sentences) to recount your tasks, responsibilities, and achievements in each position. See the sample résumé in this section.

Volunteer Experience: If your work experience is slim, or you have volunteer experience that is particularly impressive or relevant to a position, include volunteer experience in a separate section of your résumé. If you are listing more than one volunteer position, organize the positions either by chronology or relevance to the desired job.

Honors or Activities: Consider including on your résumé substantial honors or honors and activities that are directly related to the position for which you are applying. If you don't have a long employment history, listing honors and activities is a good way to communicate your accomplishments. This section can include college or graduate school honors but do not include high school honors.

Skills: Space permitting, include skills that might make you look more attractive to an employer. This section is useful to include if you do not have a lengthy employment history and need to fill out your résumé. A section on skills can also be beneficial if you have a skill that is in high demand or is unique.

Sections to Exclude Unless Specifically Requested

Do not include an objective. This portion of the résumé is becoming increasingly superfluous, especially if an employer asks for a cover letter as well as a résumé. You may actually harm your chances of employment if you include a poorly written objective, or one that is too broad, or one that is not broad enough. Of course, include an objective if specifically requested by an employer. Otherwise, carefully consider whether you should include one.

Do not include a list of references. All employers know that your references are available upon request. It is unnecessary to note this information in the résumé. It is also unnecessary to include references' contact information in your résumé or cover letter.

If you have a bachelor's degree, do not include detailed information about high school. If you have a bachelor's degree, you do not need to note your high school diploma. Also, leave out information about clubs or other activities you participated in during high school.

Writing Tips

You've read about what to put in a résumé, as well as what not to put in your résumé, but how do you even begin actually writing one? This section takes you through the process of writing a résumé step-by-step.

Gather data first. To begin writing, you need to take some time to collect information about all of your past jobs, internships, volunteer experience, education, references, special honors/activities, hobbies, skills, and anything else you deem relevant. Having this information in one place, particularly if electronic, will streamline your résumé-writing process.

List duties and accomplishments. Make a list of responsibilities or duties that were yours for each job you've had. Make sure each list is exhaustive. Even if you don't think a particular task is substantial, put it on the list.

Don't discount any employment you've had in the past. List duties and accomplishments for each job, volunteer position, and internship that you have had. You never know how your past experience could help your current job hunt. If you had a substantial success or helped your company in a tangible way, include that in your list.

Prioritize your experience. You need to decide at this stage if you are going to organize your employment and other experience chronologically (i.e., most recent to least recent) or according to relevance (most relevant or substantial experience to least relevant). Look at all of the experiences you've had and determine which is the most substantial and/or relevant to the type of job you want.

This prioritizing step will be useful later, for writing inquiry e-mails, your cover letter, and other correspondence. In addition, it will help you when it comes time to interview for a position because it will encourage you to remember and classify the various roles and responsibilities you have had.

Tailor your résumé to the position. Depending on your priorities (as discussed in the previous step), select which jobs you will include on your résumé and which ones you will exclude. Since it is vital that your résumé be no longer than one page, you will likely have to leave out some of your employment history.

Sometimes, you will shift the portions of your employment history to showcase your qualifications for a certain position. Having a master list of duties and responsibilities for each of your past jobs prepared in advance (as described above) will be a tremendous help when it comes time to customizing your résumé for specific positions.

Craft each section carefully. Now that you've organized your employment data, writing your résumé will be easier. The following tips will help you through this portion of the process.

Header: A good place to begin is with the header. Include your name, address, e-mail address, and at least one telephone number.

Education: Education is a good section to tackle second. You may choose to put this at the top, especially if you feel it is your most impressive asset. If you have a stunning employment history, you may wish to put education near the bottom of your résumé.

Employment History/Experience: This section is a little bit trickier, especially if you have had more than one job. A good way to help you narrow down which former jobs you will include on your résumé is to fill them in from your prioritization list, beginning with the top of the list. Use at least two bullet points, preferably more, to describe your tasks and responsibilities for each position. Wise selection is key. Having too many jobs on your résumé, even if they fit onto one page, can make you look unstable.

Other Sections: If space is sufficient to include other sections such as volunteer experience, internships, ministry experience, and skills, place them last. The exception to this rule is if you have unpaid experience that is directly relevant to a job for which you are applying. In that case, it may be worthwhile to make space for it by removing a job from your employment history section or by shortening your job descriptions.

Use tense appropriately. When describing your roles and responsibilities for a position you already have, use the present tense. If you are describing a position you no longer have, use the past tense.

Tell a story. Use simple statements to describe your experience instead of sentences or paragraphs. You can imagine each of your former jobs in terms of a story: What were some of the obstacles you overcame? What tangible results did your actions achieve?

Be concise. Keep each bullet point to one line or less. This limitation will not only keep your résumé clean-looking, but it will also help you describe your experience succinctly. Remember, your potential employer will probably only spend a few seconds looking at your résumé—make them count!

Take time to edit and proofread. Once you've written your résumé, have at least one person look at it to make sure you have no errors. If possible, have more people look at it. Take a break from your résumé so you can approach it with fresh eyes. After you have gone over it a few more times and had it proofread, you should be ready to send it out!

Helpful Websites

The following websites have sample résumés and templates that are available for free. Check out the different options for formatting and structure.

- https://career.vt.edu/job-search/presenting_yourself/resumes.html
- <https://www.thebalance.com/free-resume-examples-and-writing-tips-2063596>
- <http://www.resume-resource.com/resume-examples-by-professional-writers/>

Résumé Samples

The following résumé samples are provided only to demonstrate what tactics to take and avoid in writing your résumé.

ROBERTA M. JONES

87 W. 2ND STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19455
(215) 555-8793 ✉ roberta.jones@fake-mail.com

Provides proper contact information (phone number, professional e-mail, and mailing address)

EDUCATION:

✉ **Westminster Theological Seminary**; Glenside, PA
Master of Divinity in General Studies; May 2010
Current GPA: 3.89

Displays strongest asset (education) at the top

✉ **The School of Hard Knocks**; Nowhere, VA
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology; May, 2012
GPA: 3.65

Lists GPA of 3.0 or better

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

✉ **Philadelphia High School**

Spanish Teacher, Philadelphia, PA (1/19-Present)

- Design curriculum to meet unique needs of each class
- Utilize learning strategies for high school students
- Teach students fundamentals of Spanish grammar, vocabulary, and structure
- Stimulate interest in Spanish and Latin culture
- Guide students in spoken component of Spanish
- Review homework and answer questions
- Maintain class website to facilitate learning from home

Uses present tense to describe responsibilities of current job

Contains simple phrases and vivid verbs to describe employment history

✉ **Startrucks Coffee Company**

Barista, Philadelphia, PA (9/17-1/19)

- Prepared custom-order drinks swiftly and accurately
- Provided excellent service to customers
- Created new drinks such as “March Mocha Madness”
- Brainstormed promotional and revenue-generating strategies
- Promoted new products and other merchandise

Keeps bullet points to one line or less

Uses past tense to describe responsibilities of former jobs

✉ **Philadelphia State University**

Student Library Worker, Philadelphia, PA (2/15-9/17)

- Assisted patrons with checkouts and renewals of library materials
- Performed research to answer patrons’ inquiries
- Maintained productive learning environment
- Reshelved library books and journals

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

✉ **Christ the Rock Presbyterian Church**

Youth Leader, Philadelphia, PA (3/08-8/11)

- Led Bible study for high school students
- Counseled and disciplined teenage girls
- Created games and activities for kids to play

Includes volunteer experience relevant to desired position

Ineffective Résumé Sample:

WILLIAM JENKINS
(215) 555-8793 ✉ robbjopants@fake-mail.com

OBJECTIVE: To secure a position that will allow me to make a positive contribution and gain new skills.

EDUCATION:

✉ **Westminster Theological Seminary**
Master of Divinity in General Studies
Current GPA: 2.89

✉ **The School of Life**, Somewhere, WA
Bachelor of Arts
GPA: 2.89

Objective best removed

Does not include dates attended, location of school, or specific information about degree

Includes GPA lower than 3.0

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

✉ **Church of the Savior**
Youth Pastor, Philadelphia, PA

- As a youth pastor at Church of the Savior, I am responsible for the spiritual formation and development of about 50 teenagers, ages 12-18. I organize weekly activities, yearly trips, and outreach opportunities. I also teach Sunday school each week and lead Wednesday night youth group.

Does not include employment dates for this position

✉ **Cool Stuff Furnniture Shop**
Salesman, Philadelphia, PA

- I sold furniture to people. My goal was to make every experience at Cool Stuff Furniture Shop a positive one for the customer. I always gave my customers the best deals and helped them find the right furniture for their homes.

Contains misspellings

Uses complete sentences instead of phrases to describe responsibilities

✉ **Bavinck and Sons Law Firm**
Paralegal, Philadelphia, PA (02/05-09/08)

- In my role as a Paralegal for Bavinck and Sons Law Firm, I assisted lawyers with research for various cases. I also kept track of ongoing cases and filed petitions with the State of Pennsylvania.

Continues on next page, exceeding single page limit

Cover Letters

A well-constructed cover letter is vital to a successful job search. Submitting a good cover letter gives you the opportunity to impress a potential employer with your ability to write. Cover letters also allow you to showcase your communication and editing skills as well as your ability to synthesize material. Finally, you can highlight specific skills relevant to a particular position.

In your cover letter, you should present yourself in the best light. Your goal is to motivate a potential employer to hire you. Don't be shy about pointing out your strengths in your cover letter; being honest and up front about your gifts and talents is not bad

Writing Tips

Include crucial information. A cover letter should indicate the reasons why you are applying for a particular position, from where or whom you learned about the opening, and your unique qualifications and skills for that specific position.

Use a formal heading. Include the date you are sending your cover letter and the prospective employer's name and address, with, preferably, the name of a person or body to whom you are addressing your cover letter.

Address a specific person whenever possible. Politely reference the person or body to whom you are sending the letter. It is fine to use "Dear." Whenever possible, try to find out the person who will be receiving your letter so you can address him or her specifically. If you cannot get that information, it is acceptable to use a position title or the name of a department as well.

Consider organizing your letter in a way that is familiar to your reader.

Introduction: Indicate how you learned of the position and why you are applying for it.

Main Body: Highlight past experience and skills that pertain directly to the position. Pay attention to the job qualifications of the position for which you are applying.

Closing Paragraph: Express an interest in interviewing for the position. Be sure to thank the reader for his or her time.

Formatting: Cover letters should be no longer than one page. Like your résumé, your cover letter should have a clean, uncluttered look. If another format is not expressly requested, sending your cover letter as a .pdf will reduce transmission problems.

Helpful Websites

See the following websites for more information:

- https://career.vt.edu/job-search/presenting_yourself/cover-letters.html
- <http://www.resume-resource.com/cover-letter-examples-professional-writers/>
- <https://www.thebalance.com/free-cover-letter-examples-and-writing-tips-2060208>

Effective Sample Cover Letter

April 15, 2019

Dr. Jessica Miller
Assistant Principal
New Jersey Christian Academy
1234 Road Drive
Princeton, NJ 12345

Dear Dr. Miller:

Addressed to a specific person

Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. Please find my résumé included to be considered for the Spanish Teacher opening advertised on Craigslist. I am confident that my academic and employment backgrounds qualify me for this position and that I can make a positive contribution to your school.

Indicates how she learned about the position

I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish from the School of Hard Knocks in Nowhere, VA and will graduate in May with a Master of Religion degree from Westminster Theological Seminary. As a current Spanish teacher at Philadelphia High School, I have effectively guided students in learning and using Spanish. My students have consistently performed well in Pennsylvania standardized tests, and many students return to take upper level Spanish even though this class is not required for graduation. In my classroom, I have interacted with students from a wide variety of backgrounds and with many different learning styles. The class website I created and maintain facilitates home learning and allows students flexibility in obtaining homework and optional assignments.

Highlights relevant experience

My time as a barista at Starbucks Coffee Company allowed me to develop my interpersonal and communication skills. I also brainstormed revenue-generating strategies with my manager. I was promoted to assistant manager within 12 months, and acquired the additional responsibilities of supervising other employees, resolving customer complaints, and interviewing candidates for employment. Before that, I also served for three years as a youth leader in my church, guiding and discipling high school students in their spiritual walks.

I would like to discuss a possible future with your institution and am available for an interview at your convenience. Thank you for your consideration—I look forward to hearing from you!

Expresses desire to set up an interview

Sincerely,

Roberta Jones

Following Up

You've found a job you want, inquired about the position, and submitted your résumé and cover letter. Now what? If you haven't heard back from a company within a week or two, it is generally considered acceptable to contact them to check on the status of your application *unless they have requested that you do not do so*. In fact, some employers only hire those who show the ambition and enthusiasm to pursue a position with them. Thus, exercising good judgment about follow-up has the potential to distinguish you from other candidates.

When following up, keep the following guidelines in mind:

Methods of Contact

An e-mail is probably the most convenient way to follow up for both you and your potential employer. Sending an e-mail allows the employer to get back to you at his or her leisure. Another option is to call. Calling may give you a more immediate response but also may put your potential employer on the spot and seem pushy. A hand-written note is a third option, particularly if you have addressed your job materials to a particular person and want to attract his or her attention.

Frequency of Contact

If you have submitted your résumé and followed up but have not heard anything, stop contacting the company. One sure way to ruin any chances of employment with a company is to harass them.

Samples

For ideas of how to follow up in an e-mail or on the phone, consult this link, or others:

<https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-follow-up-after-submitting-a-resume-2061007>

Interviewing

The interview is critical to being extended an offer of employment. Your résumé and cover letter will only take you so far; if you make it to the interview stage, you are a serious candidate for the position. The interview will allow you to showcase your verbal communication skills, as well as get an idea of whether you would like to work for a potential employer.

Spiritual Posture. The first step in preparing for an interview is prayer. Make sure that you beseech the Lord for His guidance and help during the interview process. Ask Him to make it clear to you whether you should work for this company. Take comfort before you even step foot inside the door that the Lord's plan for you cannot be thwarted by an interview.

Preparation. You must do your homework before any interview. Examine the organization's website; really get to know the organization, its mission, and the type of work they do. Be able to explain why you wish to work for that specific organization. Make sure you reread the job description. Know the name of your interviewer. Have an idea of what a fair salary for the position is. Your level of preparation will showcase your seriousness about the position and your professionalism.

Interviewing Techniques

Practice

You should practice before you go to your first interview. Ask a friend to be the "boss" and to interview you. Give him or her questions to ask and pretend that you are in a real interview.

Answering Questions

Length: When fielding questions, try to focus on answers that relate specifically to the job at hand. Keep your answers a reasonable length, avoiding both overly elaborate stories and answers that are too brief.

Examples: It is important for you to spend time evaluating your employment history before you go to your first interview. Try to think of examples of past jobs in which you achieved a goal or performed some other task which was well-received. Focus on instances that highlight your particular strengths. Also think about professional obstacles you encountered and how you handled them.

Attitude: Try to be as positive as possible. Never speak ill about a former employer, no matter how unpleasant the working environment might have been. You want to avoid even the appearance of having a bad attitude; furthermore, as a Christian, having a bad attitude does not show Christ's love in and to a fallen world.

Body Language: In the same vein as the above advice on being positive, make sure your body language conveys professionalism. Be sure to maintain eye contact. Don't slouch.

What to Bring

Information: Make sure you bring your references' contact information as well as contact information related to your past jobs. You will likely have to fill out an application that will require this information.

Identification: It is also a good idea to bring two forms of government identification (such as your driver's license and Social Security card, or your passport) just in case they decide to hire you on the spot.

Résumé & Cover Letter: Bring a few copies of your résumé and cover letter so you can refer to them during the interview. Having extra copies of your résumé and cover letter is also a good way to impress a potential boss if he or she needs to look at your résumé again and doesn't have a copy on hand.

Evaluating an Employer

The interview works both ways. On the one hand, it is an opportunity for a potential employer to evaluate you and assess how well you would fit into his or her company. On the other, it is also a chance for you to evaluate your prospective employer.

You should be concerned at this stage about whether a potential employer will be a good match for you. See if you can imagine yourself happily working there. Do the co-workers seem nice? Is the boss someone for whom you can work? Is the working environment comfortable? Before you go in for an interview, it is good to make a list of some of the attributes you want your place of employment to have. Use this list as an evaluation tool.

Salary Negotiation

During the interview, you will likely be asked about your bottom line. Therefore, before you go in, have an idea of how much you would like to earn. Research what comparable positions pay in your area and for the type of work you are considering. Don't be afraid to name a figure. It may take a year or more once in a position to earn a raise, but you can negotiate a higher salary in a matter of minutes during the interview stage.

Writing Tips

Thank You Notes Once you have interviewed for a position, it is important to send a thank you note. A thank-you note lets the interviewer know that you are serious about the position, that you are able to follow-up, and that you have class!

Though traditionally postal mail is considered proper for thank-you notes, today e-mail is becoming more popular. Use your best judgment; if you're applying for a tech job, an impressive e-mail might be a better option than paper. If you're applying to work at a more paper-based company, a traditional note could be your ticket to success.

Obtaining References

When applying for a job, it is important to ask the right people to testify to your skills, abilities, and character. Make sure you obtain permission before using someone's name as a reference! Also, letting your references know the type of job you are interested in helps them present you in the best light for that position.

Who to Ask. Anyone who has supervised your work may make a good reference. Typically, the longer your relationship with your reference, the better the goodness of the reference. Think about your current and past bosses or managers, former professors or teachers, and pastors when determining whom to ask to be a reference. Try to supply references from those who have supervised you and worked closely with you professionally. Be sure to have some personal references with you as well. Your pastor, a mentor, or even a friend can serve as a character/personal reference for you.

How to Ask. A phone call is the most traditional, and often best, way to ask someone to be a reference. E-mail is gaining popularity, and it may be a good alternative, especially if you know a potential reference prefers to be contacted this way. If someone hesitates at all to be a reference, cross his or her name off your list. You want people who are enthusiastic about you, your work, and your employment-seeking endeavors.

When to Ask. Try to obtain permission from a prospective reference well ahead of the time that he or she may be called but not too far ahead that he or she might forget about your job search. Generally, ask your reference within two weeks to a month before he or she will be called.

What to Include. Be sure to include correct information about your references and ask what their contact preferences are.

Professional. When supplying reference information, include the name, professional title, company/school/organization, address, phone number, and e-mail.

Personal. For a personal reference, supply at least a name, job title (if appropriate), address, and phone number.

Former Employers. Even if you do not include former employers as references, it is courteous to let them know that they might be called. They will be less likely to be surprised when contacted by your potential employer. Advance notice will also give them an opportunity to reflect on your work and plan out how to provide an accurate account of it.

Helpful Websites

For more information on references, see http://business.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Resume_References.

Accepting and Declining Offers

Factors to Consider. Before you accept a job, carefully consider whether the company is a good fit for you. Ask God to direct your decision and make His path clear to you. Also consider practical matters:

Salary. Are you being offered a fair salary? Can you meet your expenses? If not, perhaps you should consider continuing your employment search. This issue is particularly sensitive if you are applying to work for a Christian organization. You obviously want to avoid being greedy; but, if you are offered a salary that will not allow you to meet your expenses, be honest with your potential employer. There is nothing wrong with earning enough to meet your expenses and negotiating a fair wage.

Working Environment. Can you see yourself in this environment for the next five or ten years? Even 20? Have you met your boss? Do your co-workers seem compatible? Do you feel like you fit into your future work environment? Will you enjoy your job? Will you want to get up to go to work each day, or do you think this potential job is something you will dread? Will you feel satisfied professionally by this position?

Commute. Will the length of your commute be tolerable? Will you have to pay for tolls or parking or metro fare? Often, a good salary will become an average salary when the cost of commuting is factored in.

Take a little bit of time to evaluate these questions and other factors before accepting a position. It is acceptable to ask a prospective employer for some time before deciding to accept a job offer, particularly if you need to talk with your spouse.

Remain Hopeful – Be Professional

If you were not selected for a position, do not become discouraged. Finding employment is often a job in and of itself; it can take time to find a position that will satisfy you professionally (and spiritually).

It is important during this time to be professional. Don't contact an employer to find out why he or she didn't hire you; that is considered inappropriate and may hamper your chances of being employed by a similar organization if word spreads about any unprofessional conduct.

In the Meantime . . .

If you are without a job, what do you do while you are looking for one? You might be able to spend the time doing things that will advance your career and make you more attractive to potential employers. In this section, we discuss some options for you to consider.

Volunteering Volunteering is a great way, as a Christian, to help show God's love to others. It is also a good way for you to gain experience, gather references, and make contacts for networking.

Taking Classes You can further develop your skill set by taking classes at a local community college or adult learning center. A new certification, advanced training in computer software, or improved

language skills can bolster your résumé and make you that much more of an attractive candidate. You may also meet people with whom you can network.

Interning Perhaps the best way for you to get a great job is to begin at the bottom as an intern. Often interning will pay little to no money; however, it can be a worthwhile investment if you obtain an internship at a company for which you really want to work.

Personal Development If you are without a job, God still has plans in store for you. Even in exile, God's people were reminded of this (Jeremiah 29:11). You can use this time to deepen your relationship with God. Being unemployed can provide extra time to spend in God's Word. Perhaps you can pursue other reading for personal development and satisfaction. Taking up a new hobby or joining a new club may also be a great way to develop yourself personally, as well as to meet new people--and new potential job contacts!

Conclusion

This handbook has outlined the basic steps you can take to find a job. It is intended to be a guide to help you navigate your way through finding, applying for, and landing a good job fit. However, it is important above all else to listen to the voice of the Lord during your job hunt. Let Him guide your endeavors, center yourself in His will for your work, and you will find the work God has for you.

Whatever you do, do it heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive from him the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord, Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:23-24 ESV