

# GUIDE TO job searching

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ONLINE INTERACTIVE BOOK 



# Job Searching

Job searching is a process full of mixed emotions. It can be incredibly exciting to start a new position or make a career change. It may also be daunting. This guide will help you through the entire process, step-by-step, regardless of whether you are applying to your first job, seeking a new position, or making a career change later in life. We are here to support you from the beginning stages of self-exploration all the way up to landing an interview.



## Tip!

If you are looking for an on-campus student job, visit <https://ucdenver.joinhandshake.com> to see job opportunities or schedule an appointment with a career counselor

# Establishing the Basics

When kicking off the job search, it can be tempting to head straight to job platforms such as LinkedIn and begin searching. However, without first considering your well-being, timeline, values, and barriers, you may end up wasting time and energy and have more difficulty finding the positions you want. Consider the following:

## 1 Are you emotionally, mentally, and physically prepared?

Job searching can be exciting, and also involve frustration or disappointment. Before diving in, ensure you have an available support system and structures in place to maintain your well-being throughout the process.

*If you need accommodations throughout the job search/application process or have questions about disclosure, schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor or Disability Resources and Services.*

### Tip!

For more information on your rights as an individual with a disability, visit <https://askjan.org>.

## 2 What is your timeline?

Depending on the industry, you may wait weeks to months after applying before actually starting a job. Do you have an urgent financial need or can you wait a few months before beginning a position? Your timeline can affect what job search methods you use.

### Fact

**25.1:** Average number of days between interview and job offer (NACE, 2023)

## 3 What are your values/non-negotiables?

What do you need to make the job a good fit for you? Salary, flexible schedule, inclusivity? By knowing your values before beginning the job search, you can narrow down what positions won't be a good fit and avoid landing a job that you'll soon want to leave. See our values activity on the next page for more guidance.

*To further explore your values, interests, personality, and skills, visit <https://www.focus2career.com> and create a free account using the Access Code 'tiv267'. For deeper exploration, schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor.*

## 4 Are you eligible to work in the country of interest?

If you are an international student, you will need to obtain Curricular Practical Training (CPT) if seeking employment while you are a student or Optional Practical Training (OPT) if seeking employment after graduation.

### Tip!

International students, visit the International Student & Scholar Services office for CPT and OPT information.



### Tip!

For more undocumented student resources, visit [www.thedream.us/](http://www.thedream.us/) or visit CU Denver's Undocumented Student Services.

If you are an undocumented student with DACA or TPS, you are eligible for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which legally allows you to work in the U.S. and you can be hired the same as any U.S. citizen.

If you are an undocumented student without DACA or TPS, you can legally earn income through independent contracting, starting a business, freelancing, or worker cooperatives.

# ACTIVITY 1: CAREER VALUES

Below is a list of career values. From the list, circle the top 10 most important to you. Then, select your top 5 and write them in the spaces provided. You can add any values of your own that you do not see listed. When job searching, use these top five values as criteria to determine if the company and position will be a good fit for you.

accountability	creativity	humility	respect
achievement	diversity	humor/fun	responsibility
adaptability	enthusiasm	independence	risk-taking
ambition	efficiency	integrity	safety
attitude	ethics	initiative	salary
awareness	excellence	intuition	stability
caring	fairness	leadership	success
coaching	family	learning	sustainability
commitment	forgiveness	listening	spirituality
communication	friendships	openness	teamwork
community	generosity	patience	trust
compassion	health	perseverance	vision
competence	helping others	power	wealth
cooperation	honesty	recognition	work-life balance

My top five values:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

See 'Activity #4: Assessing Company Fit' on page 12 for strategies on how to determine if a company matches your values.

# HOW TO *USE AI IN THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS*

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be helpful throughout many stages of the job search process, when used properly and effectively. Some ways you can utilize AI include:

1. Exploring job titles related to your degree or career interests
2. Identifying organizations that are hiring
3. Creating a message to ask someone for an informational interview
4. Identifying key words in a job description and checking whether those words are in your resume
5. Generating practice interview questions using a job description

To obtain the information you want, you need to be very clear in your instructions. ChatGPT, and other AI tools, are like a blender. You have to put in the right ingredients to get the output you desire. Here are two examples of ways you can use AI effectively in the job search process:

When exploring career options, the more detail the better.

**Example:** Instead of *“What should I do with my life?”*

**Try:** *“I’m a CU Denver undergraduate student in Psychology. I’m interested in diversity and equity, gender rights, and sustainability, and I want to work in a hybrid environment. What are 10 career paths that could fit my interests?”*

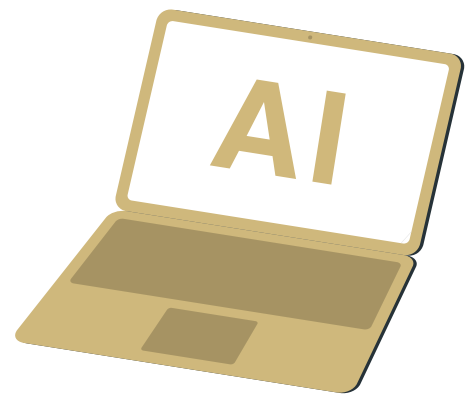
When identifying key words in a job description, specify how many words you want it to check for and copy and paste the entire job description.

**Example:** *“Please tell me the 15 most important skills in this job description.”*

## Final notes about AI

Because these tools are built by humans, they also contain our biases. You may find that particular words or phrasing from the system don’t match how you would write something, may not represent you, contain typos, or lack your personality. Always proofread and edit suggestions from AI instead of copying and pasting. Also, verify the confidentiality of whatever AI tool you are using. Every piece of data you input may be used to train the model, so if you don’t want your information to be stored, don’t put it in the system.

In summary, AI is a helpful tool to save you time in the job search, as long as it is used strategically.



# Where do I look for a job?

The short answer is – anywhere! Anyone you speak to could be a possible connection to landing a position. You may learn of an opportunity through a family member, see an advertisement on social media, or a recruiter may even reach out to you. Here are some common ways to start looking for jobs:

## 1 Job platforms

LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) and Indeed ([www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)) are two of the most common job platforms, although there are many others. Handshake ([www.ucdenver.joinhandshake.com](http://www.ucdenver.joinhandshake.com)) is a platform to find on-campus jobs and work-study jobs, in addition to local and national jobs. For assistance with Handshake, visit the Career Center.

### Job Search Platform Strategies:

- I. Use the filters to narrow down your results
- II. Switch up your search terms
- III. Find platforms specific to your industry through searching online or asking professionals

**Example:** [HigherEdJobs.com](http://HigherEdJobs.com) for positions in higher education and [Dice.com](http://Dice.com) for engineering and IT positions.

- IV. Set up job alerts to be notified of new jobs fitting your criteria

## 2 Company websites

While using job platforms is a quick and easy way to search, some companies only post open positions on their website. Search online for organizations whose mission and vision align with your own and then check what jobs are posted on their websites. Even if nothing is available, reach out to someone who works there to show your interest. This may lead to a job opportunity in the future.

## 3 Networking

By building connections with friends, family members, classmates, and professionals, you may learn of opportunities not easily found online. If you connect with someone who works at a company you're interested in, they can also be a reference for you. To find people to network with, start with those you are close to such as friends and family. To learn more about networking, explore our Networking and Informational Interviewing guide located in Handshake.

### Tip!

To search for companies related to your major, visit <https://www.buzzfile.com/major/employers-by-major>.



## **4 Job/employment fairs**

CU Denver hosts an Internship and Job Fair every fall and spring semester as an opportunity for current students and alumni to talk directly to recruiters. There are many workforce centers in Colorado that also hold job fairs throughout the year.

## **5 Professional organizations**

There are state and national organizations for almost every career interest, ranging from entrepreneurship to video games to criminology. These organizations often post jobs on their websites, host conferences where you can network with professionals, and publish articles about developments in their field. You can find lists of professional organizations by major, and other helpful online resources, in our Career Briefs in Handshake (<https://ucdenver.joinhandshake.com/stu/articles/25294>).

## **AM I QUALIFIED TO APPLY?**

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When determining whether you are qualified for a position, look at the ‘minimum requirements’ or ‘minimum qualifications.’ While you do need to meet most of these to be eligible, you do not have to have experience in all of the job responsibilities, as you are likely to receive training in some tasks.

If a position asks for a certain number of years of experience in their minimum qualifications, consider if you meet that requirement by combining all your experience over time. Depending on how they define experience, paid or unpaid positions, internships, volunteering, participation in clubs and organizations, and part-time work can all count toward the total.

When in doubt, go ahead and apply. Here are some reasons why:

- You never know who else applied. Potentially you stand out from the other applicants!
- You might be the only one to apply or one of a few who have applied.
- Sometimes, the company may not think the position you applied for is the best fit for you, but they may know of another position that you would be a good fit for and recommend it to you.
- By applying, the company now has your resume on hand or in their hiring pool and may reference it when looking to fill future positions.
- The worst that can happen is you don’t hear back or you receive a rejection.



# Strategies for Success

Now that you know where to search for jobs, there are some important actions to take to set yourself up for success before applying. It's important to check your social media presence, have references prepared, set up your contact information, have a system for tracking your applications, and set up a LinkedIn profile. See the following page for activities to help you stay on top of these tasks.

- 1 Check your social media presence**  
Employers may look you up online. Try searching yourself - is there anything public that you may not want employers to see?

## Fact

67% of employers say they use social networking sites to research potential job candidates (The Harris Poll, 2020)

- 2 Create a LinkedIn profile**  
Use your LinkedIn profile to showcase more than your resume by including publications, videos, projects, recordings, or additional experiences. For assistance in building a strong LinkedIn profile, schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor.

- 3 Prepare references**  
Check the application for how many references are required. References should include people who can speak highly of you and may include teachers, coaches, supervisors, or advisors. Ask someone for their permission before listing them as a reference.

- 4 Set up a professional voicemail and check it regularly**  
In your voicemail recording, state your full name, invite callers to leave their name and contact information, and say that you will respond soon.

- 5 Select a professional email**  
You may want to set up a separate email account when job searching to make tracking easier.



- 6 Track your applications**  
For an example chart, see Activity #3 on page 11.

- 7 Target companies that fit your values**  
Before looking for jobs, research companies that support your values and non-negotiables. See Activity #4 on page 12 for ways to assess company fit once you find a company you are interested in working for.

**Goal:** *I will have a new position by \_\_\_\_\_ (date)*

### 1. What tasks do you need to get done before beginning the job search?

Updating social media, LinkedIn profile, collecting references, etc. Also include any personal tasks you need to complete before beginning this process.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. How many hours can you dedicate to the job search per week or per month?

This includes networking, updating your resume and cover letter, researching companies, etc.

- a. I can dedicate \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week for the next \_\_\_\_\_ (weeks or months)

### 3. What days and times have you set aside for job searching?

- a. Day(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Time(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. What supports do you have throughout this process? Roommates, family, friends?

You want to have someone close to you available throughout the high's and low's of job searching.

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## ACTIVITY 3: TRACKING APPLICATIONS



The number of positions that someone applies to varies depending on industry, salary expectations, job availability, the economy, education requirements, and many other factors. Many job seekers apply for over a hundred positions. We recommend focusing on quality over quantity by tailoring your resume and cover letter for each position and taking the time to set up informational interviews with employees at the organization, instead of applying to as many jobs as you can.

By tracking your applications, you can better understand the number of positions you have applied to, how long you have been applying, if you have heard back or not, when to follow-up with employers, and gain a better understanding of where you might need support in the process.

Use the chart below or create one of your own to track your applications.

	Job 1	Job 2	Job 3
Position Title			
Company			
Contact Information			
Person Contacted at Company?			
Applied Through (Website, Platform, etc.)			
Date Applied			
Application Deadline (If provided)			
Heard Back?			
Next Steps			

It can be difficult to determine if a company or organization will be a good fit for you just by reading their website or a job description. To ensure you land a position that will be fulfilling and meet your needs, take the time to research the company in advance. Begin by rewriting your top 5 values from Activity #1 below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Next, use some of the methods below to research how well the organization matches your values and if it will be a good fit for you.

### 1. Environmental Scans

Evaluate the organization's physical space and presence, in-person or virtually. Consider, what kind of lighting do you work best in? Would you prefer to have your own desk or work alongside others? How loud is it? What does transportation or parking look like?

- a. Stop by the location in person
- b. Shadow someone for a few hours or a day, especially if you have a connection who works there
- c. Volunteer or intern at the site
- d. Check out the site during an in-person interview

### 2. Cyber Scans

Evaluate the organization based on their online and digital presence. Consider, what materials and statements do they have about allyship, equity and inclusion, or representation? What does the news say about them? Do their actions align with what is in their mission or values statements?

- a. Explore their website, including who works there
- b. Look at their social media pages
- c. Read employee reviews on GlassDoor (<https://www.glassdoor.com/>)
- d. Search them online and read what has been published about them

### 3. Conversational Scans

Evaluate the organization based on conversations, especially by talking with employees who currently work there or who have worked there in the past.

- a. Ask recruiters questions at a job fair
- b. Message an employee through LinkedIn or email them
- c. Conduct an informational interview (see our guide in Handshake on Networking and Informational Interviewing)

## ACTIVITY 4: *ASSESSING COMPANY FIT*

 print this page!

After you have researched the organization, evaluate using the questions below.

**In what ways did you see yourself and your identities represented in this organization?**

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**How well does it match your top 5 values?**

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**What stood out to you (good or bad)?**

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**What is your physical and mental reaction when you think about doing this job?**

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**On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good), how much do you think this job would be a good fit for you? Why?**

*Very Poor*   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   *Very Good*

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# Building a Strong Application

After setting yourself up for success, you are now ready to begin applying for jobs. When you find a job you are interested in and that meets your values, thoroughly check the directions in the application and tailor your application materials. This will give you will have a much higher chance of landing an interview.

## 1 Ensure the position is still active

Job platforms such as Indeed and LinkedIn don't always update as quickly as the company's website, so visit there first to ensure the position is still active. The company website may also have more detailed information regarding the position.

## 2 Tailor your resume and cover letter

Because employers scan resumes and cover letters instead of reading them word-for-word, it is crucial that they can quickly spot the key words and skills they are looking for. Many tech and engineering industries also use an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to rank resumes by how well they match the job requirements (see the Q&A on **pg.17** for more information). While you don't need to recreate your application materials from scratch every time you apply for a new job, you do need to adjust them. See our Guide to Writing Exceptional Resumes and our Guide to Writing Cover Letters in Handshake for more information and examples.



## 3 Follow all instructions

Do exactly as the application requires. If it asks for a design portfolio or examples of your work, submit those. If it wants certain information for each of your references, include that information. If you don't follow directions when applying, it will give the impression that you won't be able to follow directions if they hire you.



# Follow-up

Congratulations! You have now put in the time and effort to explore your values, find jobs of interest, collect references, track your applications, prepare your resume and cover letter, and apply. You can stand out from other applicants by taking one additional step – contacting the recruiter or manager overseeing the position after applying. You can sometimes find the contact information for this individual within the job description or you may need to look on the company’s website or call the company. Your message should be short and include the following:

- The title of the position you applied to and that you have submitted your application
- Your excitement for the position or company, citing specific reasons
- A very brief overview of your experience and how it can benefit the role
- Asking if there is any other information you can provide and that you hope to hear from them

## Common situations

### Fact

It may take six months or longer to complete the federal government hiring process and receive a job offer (Military One Source, 2023)



I haven't heard back yet

Depending on the organization, you may receive an automated reply, a personalized response, or nothing regarding your application. While we can never know exactly why a company doesn't respond, here are some potential reasons: your resume and cover letter didn't pass the ATS screening, you were not qualified for the position, your application was incomplete, they don't offer the sponsorship you require, or they have already filled the position.

I want an update on my application

It is okay to contact the company to inquire about the status of your application. Give the employer a week or two after the deadline (or a week or two after applying if there is no deadline) to review the applications before reaching out. Do not follow-up more than twice. Although you may be desperate to hear back, too many emails or phone calls can come across as pushy and employers may reject your application. It is appropriate to reach out over phone or email. When you reach out, be polite, professional, brief, and ask about the status of your application.



I want to know what I could have done better



It can be disappointing and frustrating to not hear back or receive a rejection after working hard on your materials. This doesn't necessarily mean you were a bad candidate; it just means there was someone else more qualified. If you're curious to know what you could have done better, reach out to the recruiter or hiring manager via email asking how you could be a better candidate in the future. Keep the email polite, professional, brief, and say that you appreciate any insights they can provide.

## I landed an interview!

Congratulations! Landing an interview means that the employers felt you stood out from other applicants, so take a moment to appreciate the hard work you put into your application and the search process. Respond in a timely manner to the employer to schedule an interview and begin preparing. For more information on interviewing, visit our [Guide to Interviewing in Handshake](#).





# questions & answers

## **Q: How many positions should I apply to?**

**A:** Focus on quality over quantity. You will have a better chance of landing an interview by taking the time to tailor your resume and cover letter to a few positions rather than submitting the same documents to dozens of jobs. There is no magic number for how many jobs to apply to, but consider how much time you have in your schedule, your timeline, and what job search methods you are using.

## **Q: Can I apply to multiple positions at the same company?**

**A:** Yes! However, be sure to adjust your resume and cover letter for each position and explain why you are interested in each one. It is also not recommended to apply to a lot of open positions at one company, as it may confuse hiring managers and give the impression that you don't have focus or an intended career path.

## **Q: Should I use the 'easy apply' option on LinkedIn or Indeed?**

**A:** Although this option may save you time, we recommend against it. On LinkedIn, 'easy apply' pulls in information from your LinkedIn profile which, unless you take the time to change your profile for every job you apply to, isn't tailored to the position. On Indeed, if you use the 'apply now' filter, you may miss additional requirements within the application and the recruiter would have to contact you for the missing information. We recommend applying through the company's website, whenever you can.

## **Q: What is an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)?**

**A:** An ATS is a software that companies use to organize and track job candidates through the recruitment and hiring process. They help businesses of all sizes manage job postings, candidate information, track applications, communicate with applicants, and onboard them. There are dozens of different ATS's that all have different features. Advanced ATS's will scan resumes for certain keywords and filter out applicants that don't match the job description. If you want your resume to be seen by a human and increase your chances of landing an interview, it's crucial to tailor your resume to every position you apply for.

## **Q: Should I use a staffing agency?**

**A:** Staffing agencies are helpful for those needing immediate income. Their purpose is to save employers time and effort in finding candidates by doing the searching for them. If you partner with a staffing agency, they may offer you positions at their partner companies for you to fill. They may not have many positions to offer and those positions may not be ones you would enjoy, but you may land a job more quickly than traditional job searching.



# congrats!

## YOU LEARNED ABOUT JOB SEARCHING

At LynxConnect, we're here to support you throughout the employment process!  
Schedule an appointment in **Handshake** to talk with a professional about job searching.

Have some quick questions or would like faster assistance from a peer instead?  
Choose "**LynxConnect - Peer Career Advisor**" in Handshake for appointment options.

## need more help?

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

**CU Denver Career Center**

Tivoli Student Union, Suite 439 | 303-315-4000 | [ucdenver.edu/lynxconnect/career-center](https://ucdenver.edu/lynxconnect/career-center)