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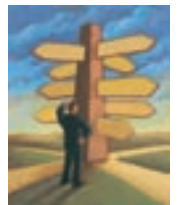
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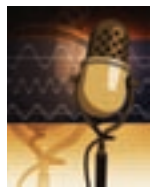
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Going “green”: Environmental jobs for scientists and engineers

Alice Ramey

It’s hard to avoid the word “green” these days. From policies to programs, it seems that green is cool—and red hot.

Green is often used as a synonym for environmental or ecological, especially as it relates to products and activities aimed at minimizing damage to our planet. Scientists and engineers have long had important roles in the environmental movement. Their expertise is focused on a variety of issues, including increasing energy efficiency, improving air and water quality, and sustaining natural resources. And, with interest in such projects growing, there should be additional opportunities for these scientists and engineers in the future.

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Some discussions of these occupations classify workers by environmental issue, such as air quality, solid waste management, or land conservation. Others group them by project category, such as environmental protection, environmental health and safety, and natural resources management. This article uses the latter method to describe the job duties, employment, outlook, wages, and training requirements for conservation scientists, environmental engineers, environmental scientists, and hydrologists. Suggestions for finding more information on these topics begin on page 9.

Science and engineering go green

Conservation scientists, environmental scientists, environmental engineers, and hydrologists are among the workers who apply their specialized knowledge to a variety of environmental issues. This specialized knowledge comes from college study in math

and sciences, including biology, chemistry, geography, and statistics. In addition, good communications skills are essential for writing reports and sharing project results with employers, colleagues, or the public.

These workers gather and analyze information to create solutions to the problems they study. Conservation scientists usually work independently, but environmental engineers, environmental scientists, and hydrologists are often part of a team.

Conservation scientists

Conservation scientists develop strategies to help manage, improve, and protect the Earth's resources. To devise these protective strategies, conservation scientists often collect samples of soil, water, and plants, as well as record data on plant and animal life. After they have analyzed the samples and data, these workers create a conservation plan. Their plan offers strategies for optimizing resources while minimizing damage to the surrounding environment.

There are several types of conservation scientists, and they often have different job titles. One of the most common types is range manager. These workers study and care for rangelands—the open expanses of land located primarily in the Western States and Alaska that contain natural resources, such as wildlife habitats, watersheds, and mineral and energy sources. The overall goal of range managers is to safeguard long-term sustainability of these resources, thereby ensuring a future source of grazing land, clean water, and wildlife.

The specific duties of range managers vary. These duties might include developing plans to manage natural resources, conducting studies to determine an activity's impact on an area, assisting in managing ranches, or restoring damaged ecosystems.

Another type of conservation scientist is soil and water conservationist. These workers study soil and water conditions and offer

advice about maintaining or improving the quality of these and related resources. Soil conservationists help identify causes of soil erosion and develop plans to correct them. The work of water conservationists is similar to that of hydrologists, whose description begins on page 8.

Job market and wages. Conservation scientists held about 15,800 jobs in May 2008, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Federal, State, and local governments employed nearly 75 percent of these workers. Other conservation scientists are employed by social advocacy groups, including nonprofit organizations, and by consulting firms. A small portion is self-employed.

Soil and water conservation scientists work throughout the United States, particularly in counties that need help managing their wetlands and other conservation areas. In contrast, range managers work almost entirely

Range managers, a type of conservation scientists, care for open lands that contain natural resources.



in Alaska and the Western States, where most of the Nation's rangelands are located.

In projecting employment, BLS classifies conservation scientists with foresters. This combined occupational group is expected to have employment growth that is slower than the average for all occupations between 2006 and 2016, largely due to expected job losses for foresters in the timber industry and to budgetary restraints at all levels of government. However, these factors will be offset by others that are expected to create opportunities for conservation scientists.

The best opportunities should be in consulting services, as both governments and businesses increasingly rely on consultants for conservation work. Consulting firms are expected to hire additional conservation scientists in response to a growing demand for professionals to prepare environmental impact statements.

Workers will also be needed to develop erosion and sediment control plans and to monitor water quality. And States are expected to employ conservation scientists to design ways to prevent water from being polluted by agricultural producers and industrial plants.

The mean annual wages of conservation scientists in May 2008 were \$60,170, according to BLS. Mean wages were \$69,090 for conservation scientists in the Federal Government and \$51,520 in local government. (BLS does not have wage data for these workers in State government.) Those employed by social advocacy groups had mean wages of \$54,540; those employed in management, scientific, and technical consulting services had mean wages of \$55,320.

Preparation. The most significant source of education for conservation scientists is a bachelor's degree in fields such as ecology, natural resource management, agriculture, or environmental science. Range managers usually have a degree in range management or range science. Few schools offer degrees specifically in soil or water conservation.

Nine colleges and universities offer degree programs in range management that are accredited by the Society for Range

Management. However, many other colleges and universities offer courses in range management and related disciplines. Courses in range management include subjects such as plant, animal, and soil sciences.

Some range managers acquire additional credentials through the Society for Range Management's professional certification programs. Certification is optional, but demonstrates that recipients have met the high standards required for completion of a program.

Environmental engineers

Environmental engineers develop methods, systems, and products to prevent or repair environmental harm. In compliance with numerous laws and regulations, these workers use principles of science and engineering to solve a variety of environmental problems.

Environmental engineers may specialize in the types of problems they solve. Some assess the likely impact of different projects on air and water quality, animal habitats, and other aspects of the natural and human environment and then devise ways to avoid or minimize harm. Others study watersheds and other natural water systems and develop processes, policies, and machinery for maintaining and supplying clean water to the public. Still others develop wastewater treatment or other systems to control or reduce problems associated with disposal of pollutants.

These areas of specialization shape their job tasks. For example, environmental engineers who study the environmental impact of a proposed construction project analyze data and assess the extent of possible harm to the environment. As a result of their evaluation, they may recommend that the construction plans be altered to minimize potential harm.

Job market and wages. Environmental engineers held about 52,590 jobs in May 2008, according to BLS. About 30 percent worked for Federal, State, or local governments. An additional 30 percent worked for engineering services firms. The remaining environmental engineers were employed by management, scientific, and technical consulting services; scientific research and

Environmental engineers use principles of science and engineering to solve a variety of environmental problems.



development services; and remediation and other waste management services.

BLS projects that employment of environmental engineers will grow at a rate that is much faster than the average for all occupations between 2006 and 2016. Increased demand for these engineers will result from a need to comply with environmental laws and regulations and to develop methods for cleanup of existing hazards. In addition, these workers will be needed to help devise ways to prevent future harm to both the environment and public health—such as by developing safe methods for transporting and disposing of toxic waste.

In May 2008, according to BLS, mean annual wages of environmental engineers

were \$77,970. Environmental engineers who worked for the Federal Government had mean wages of \$92,750. State government workers had mean wages of \$65,320, and local government workers had mean wages of \$66,510. Workers employed by engineering services firms had mean annual wages of \$80,450.

Preparation. The most significant source of education for environmental engineers is a master's degree in engineering, although some opportunities exist for workers whose highest level of education is a bachelor's degree. In March 2008, there were more than 60 colleges and universities with environmental engineering programs approved by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

All States regulate the practice of engineering through licensure. This pro-

fessional licensure usually requires 4 years of work experience and successful completion of an examination. Recent graduates, however, can start the licensing process by taking the examination in two stages. In several States, engineers must meet continuing education requirements to remain licensed. For environmental engineers, optional certification offered by the American Academy of Environmental Engineers allows them to demonstrate that they have met specified standards established by the academy.

Environmental scientists

Environmental scientists conduct research to help identify and lessen environmental hazards that affect both humans and wildlife.

This research involves collecting and analyzing samples of air, food, water, and soil to determine the state of the environment.

Using their skills and training, these scientists attempt to solve problems ranging from reduction of carbon dioxide emissions to preventing the loss of habitats to monitoring waste disposal. After environmental scientists identify a problem, they come up with ways to reduce or eliminate its negative effects.

Environmental scientists work with people at all levels of government to develop regulations and monitor compliance with environmental laws and regulations. Those who work on policy formation might help to identify ways of changing human behavior to avoid future problems, such as groundwater contamination or ozone depletion.

Some environmental scientists work for consulting firms that help businesses and government agencies comply with environmental

laws and regulations, especially in efforts related to groundwater decontamination and flood control. Some of these workers write risk assessments, for example, to explain the likely environmental effects of construction and other projects.

Job market and earnings. In May 2008, according to BLS, environmental scientists and specialists, including health, held about 80,100 jobs. About 45 percent of environmental scientists worked for Federal, State, and local governments. A significant portion of the remaining scientists were dispersed among management, scientific, and technical consulting services and architectural, engineering, and related services. Other environmental scientists were self-employed.

Employment is projected to grow much faster than average for environmental scientists, according to BLS. Job growth will be driven by the desire to offset environmental



Many degree programs for environmental scientists offer an interdisciplinary approach to natural science.

damage caused by an increase in population. Demand for environmental scientists will also result from the need to comply with complex environmental laws and regulations.

BLS data show that in May 2008, the mean annual wages for environmental scientists were \$65,280. Mean wages were \$58,040 for these scientists in local government; \$70,450 in management, scientific, and technical consulting services; and \$63,990 in engineering services. (No BLS wage data are available for environmental scientists in Federal and State government.)

Preparation. The most significant source of education for entry-level environmental scientist positions is a master's degree. However, some entry-level positions exist for workers whose highest level of education is a bachelor's degree.

Environmental scientists usually have a degree in environmental science, life science, chemistry, geology, geophysics, or atmospheric science. Many of these degree programs offer an interdisciplinary approach to natural

science. Undergraduates also study pollution abatement, ecosystems protection and restoration, hydrology, hazardous-waste management, and environmental legislation. Those interested in doing consulting work may benefit from taking business and marketing classes.

Hydrologists

Hydrologists find ways to optimize our use of water, protect it from contamination, and improve water sources that have been damaged or polluted. Their work helps ensure easy access to safe water for households, businesses, crop irrigation, power generation, and more.

Hydrologists study the quality, quantity, location, and movement of water. They follow water as it travels through rivers, estuaries, and streams; as it seeps into the ground; and as it evaporates into the atmosphere and returns to Earth as precipitation. Hydrologists typically split their time between the office and the outdoors, frequently traveling to field sites and working in all types of weather, climates, and terrain.

Through observation and data collection, hydrologists study water conditions in a particular area.



Through observation and data collection in the field, hydrologists learn about the water in a particular area. These data are used to summarize water conditions and to devise models that simulate these conditions. These models, which can be manipulated to replicate different scenarios, have a variety of applications. For example, models help hydrologists to predict possible floods and droughts, offer design advice for bridges and dams, map efficient allocations of water, and provide guidance on policies for preventing water contamination.

Job market and wages. Hydrologists held about 7,600 jobs in May 2008, according to BLS. Federal, State, and local governments employed about half of these workers. Architectural, engineering, and related services employed about 25 percent of these workers. Other hydrologists worked for management, scientific, and technical consulting services firms or were self-employed.

BLS projects that employment of hydrologists will grow faster than the average for all occupations between 2006 and 2016. Demand for hydrologists should be strong as a growing human population increasingly builds and resides in environmentally sensitive locations. As people continue migrating toward coastal regions, for example, hydrologists will be needed to mitigate the effects of natural hazards such as floods, landslides, and hurricanes. Hydrologists also will be needed to study hazardous-waste sites and to determine the effects of pollutants on soil and groundwater so engineers can design remediation systems.

Increased government regulations—such as those for managing storm water, and on issues related to water conservation, deteriorating coastal environments, and rising sea levels—also will spur employment growth for hydrologists.

In May 2008, according to BLS, hydrologists had mean annual wages of \$73,540. Those in architectural, engineering, and related services had mean wages of \$75,830; workers in management, scientific, and technical consulting services had mean wages of

\$74,760. Hydrologists employed by the Federal Government had mean wages of \$78,470. (BLS does not have wage data for hydrologists in State and local government.)

Preparation. The most significant source of education for hydrologists is a master's degree. A bachelor's degree in hydrologic science is sometimes enough to qualify for consulting jobs related to water quality or waste water treatment.

The American Institute of Hydrology offers optional certification in professional hydrology, which may benefit hydrologists seeking advancement.

For more information

If you're considering a green career with a science or engineering focus, you have options in addition to the occupations profiled here. Botanists, chemists, geoscientists, agricultural engineers, geological engineers, and science and engineering technicians are some examples of occupations that may include work with an environmental focus.

But work in an environmental career isn't limited to science and engineering. Environmental jobs include many types of workers in a variety of occupations. Curators in a nature center, for example, educate visitors about a particular ecosystem. Lawyers might specialize in environmental issues but also work on other kinds of cases. And construction laborers' projects might include retrofitting a building for energy efficiency—and working on traditional buildings, too. Visit your local library and search online to find resources related to environmental careers.

For information about specific occupations, see the BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. In addition to the occupations in this article, *Handbook* data and descriptive information are available for other occupations that occasionally involve green work. The *Handbook* describes the job duties, working conditions, wages, usual training, outlook, and more for occupations ranging from landscape architects to urban planners.



Find the *Handbook* in libraries, career centers, and online at www.bls.gov/ooh.

Another BLS resource is the *Career Guide to Industries*, which provides occupational information from an industry perspective. The *Career Guide* is online at www.bls.gov/oco/cg.

The BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program also provides details, such as industry concentration and wage information, on the data it collects. For example, for charts showing employment by industry of some environmental occupations, see the data highlight on the OES Web site at www.bls.gov/oes/highlight_environment.htm.

The *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* covers a range of topics, some of which describe occupations with a green focus. Recent articles include “You’re a *what?* Limnologist,” from the winter 2008–09 issue and online at www.bls.gov/ooq/2008/winter/yawhat.pdf, and “On the grid: Careers in energy,” from the fall 2008 issue and online at www.bls.gov/ooq/2008/fall/art02.pdf.

Get general information about environmental careers from the Green Careers Center, formerly the Environmental Career Center. Its employment resources include information about training and degree programs, workshops, and environmental associations. Contact the career center at:

Green Careers Center
2 Eaton St., Suite 711
Hampton, VA 23669
Toll-free: 1 (800) 745-0639
(757) 727-7895
eccinfo@environmentalcareer.com
www.environmentalcareer.com

For online listings of green jobs, searchable by sector (such as climate change or renewable energy), city, or State, visit the Green Jobs Network at www.greenjobs.net.

To learn more about the occupations featured in this article, contact the professional association of the ones that interest you.

For information about conservation scientists, contact:

Society for Range Management
10030 W. 27th Ave.
Wheat Ridge, CO 80215
(303) 986-3309
srmweb@rangelands.org

www.rangelands.org/srm.shtml

For information about environmental scientists, contact:

American Geological Institute
4220 King St.
Alexandria, VA 22302
(703) 379-2480
www.agiweb.org

For information about environmental engineers, contact:

American Academy of
Environmental Engineers
130 Holiday Ct., Suite 100
Annapolis, MD 21401
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info@aaee.net
www.aaee.net

For information about hydrologists, contact:

American Institute of Hydrology
Engineering D—Mail Code 6603
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
1230 Lincoln Dr.
Carbondale, IL 62901
(618) 453-7809
www.aihydrology.org



Career planning the second time around

John Mullins

Do you dream about what you want to be—even though you're all grown up? If so, embarking on a second career may be for you.

People change careers for a number of reasons. Some want to do work that they find more meaningful or that makes better use of their skills than their current job. Others might be acting on a long-deferred dream or in pursuit of new interests. And for some, it's less a choice than a necessity: They may find themselves heading in a new direction after facing a layoff or other job loss.

The reason for changing careers varies from one person to another, as does the process itself. If you're considering changing careers, either by choice or by necessity, keep reading. The pages that follow offer tips on assessing your current situation: evaluating the career you have, identifying your motives for wanting to change it, and knowing whether your personal finances allow for taking such a step. You'll also learn how to assess yourself for career fitness, including your values, skills, and interests. And you don't have to do this alone; private and government resources are available to help you through the process. Sources for finding additional information and support are provided at the end.

As you read the article, keep in mind that there is an important distinction between changing jobs and changing careers. Switching jobs is any movement from one employer

to another. Changing careers means leaving your established occupation for another, such as an accountant deciding to become a schoolteacher. People change jobs fairly often—about every 5 years, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Deciding to take a new job can, of course, affect your life in many ways and should be thoroughly pondered. But career change is usually a life-altering event and needs to be considered even more carefully.

Assess your current situation

You may have some idea what the destination is on your journey into a new career. A starting point in planning any journey, however, is—well, to know your starting point. Assessing your current career status and your financial health will allow you to plan well for your new career.

Your current career. Understanding where you are in your career is important, because the path it has taken can provide insights for pursuing a new one. If your progress has been slow or unsteady from the start, for example, it's a good bet you were never well-suited to your occupation. If your progress has stalled, it's possible that the way you relate to your job has changed—either because of changes in the work environment, changes in yourself, or perhaps both. And if you've advanced steadily and are still moving

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forward, you'll want to focus on what's gone right.

Whether your career has progressed badly or well, identify your key accomplishments and evaluate how satisfying they have been. Accomplishments in your current job that are fulfilling are something you'll want to replicate in a new career. Those that have had little meaning for you, on the other hand, will also mean little to you in the future.

Your career change motive. If you're like some people, you may be dissatisfied with your career but have only a vague understanding of why you're unhappy. From your colleagues to your commute, there are numerous sources of workplace discontent apart from the work itself. Carefully consider the motives behind your desire to change careers. Sometimes, you might just need to find a new job—not a new career.

Weigh your job duties and working conditions against your preferences to identify the characteristics that you like and dislike about your job. You might discover that some are specific to the occupation, while others are specific to the job. For example, working behind a desk every day is an occupational characteristic for an editor; if you're an editor who has grown tired of being deskbound, you should pursue a more physically active career. But if you're an editor who's dissatisfied with your company's retirement plan, switching jobs may be a better solution.

Identifying what you like about your current career is also important. For example, as a salesworker, you might enjoy the personal interaction that is part of that occupation. When considering a new career, you might want to choose ones that include similar interaction.

Your finances. Your financial situation may determine whether it's possible to change careers. No matter how financially secure you are, changing careers can be costly.

You're likely to be starting a new career at the entry level, so you should be prepared to accept lower wages than you're accustomed to earning in your current job. And if you need more training for the career you're

considering, you may need to accommodate the training by working fewer hours—or leaving the workforce altogether—and by assuming the costs of the training. Therefore, make sure you understand all of your financial obligations, and whether you will be able to meet them, before you embark on a new career path.

Start by identifying your financial needs and the income required to meet them. “Many people have no idea how much money they need to earn,” says Connecticut-based career counselor Julie Jansen. “Evaluating that is a critical step.”

Some costs, such as those for housing and health insurance, are easily identifiable. Other obligations are less clear. It may be tempting to finance your career change with your retirement fund, for example, but doing so would probably not be wise. Community-based nonprofit organizations offer financial literacy programs that can teach you about financial concepts and help you establish a budget, as well as maintain or gain control of your finances.

Financial considerations are especially important if you're contemplating career change after a layoff or other job loss. Pursuing education or training for new careers often results in ineligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. There are, however, some training programs associated with State unemployment insurance programs that allow you to continue to collect benefits. These programs are usually intended for workers who are unlikely to be reemployed without retraining, due to permanent changes in the economy.

Assess yourself

Some people know just what they want from a new career. They know the interests they want to explore and the skills they want to use.

But most career changers need to assess themselves, especially their skills and interests. “Self-awareness is critical, but it's not much appreciated or understood,” says Jansen. “It's important in identifying what you want to do, what your skills are, and what

you don't—and do—like about your current occupation.”

Self-assessment can be a difficult process because it involves identifying personal flaws as well as strengths, and failures as well as successes. “It’s a big stumbling block, because many people are resistant to the process,” says New York career counselor Angel Román. Like it or not, though, career changers need to consider their values, skills, and interests.

Work values. If you’re thinking about changing careers because you’re unhappy in your current one, it could be because your current occupation is a poor match for your work values.

Work values are the aspects of your job that you find meaningful and rewarding, and they’re specific to you. These values may be characteristics of the job itself, such as the level of independence it allows or the chance to be creative. Or, work values may be characteristics that accompany the job, such as wages, job stability, or moral fulfillment.

Identifying which values are most important to you is a crucial step in considering career possibilities. Although it’s unlikely that any single job will satisfy all your work values, fulfilling as many of them as possible will improve your chances for being content in your new career.

Skills. Whether you’re changing careers or just changing jobs, you need to determine the skills you have. Your skills inventory should include those you’ve acquired in current and past jobs, in school, through hobbies, and through volunteer work.

You’ve probably acquired more skills than you realize. Using them every day may make your abilities seem mundane and unremarkable to you, but they may be transferable to your new career.

It’s also important to identify skills you need to improve—or, perhaps, lack completely. You may have computer programming skills, for example, that are adequate in your current career. But the new career you’re considering might require greater programming knowledge. Identifying skills gaps is

important in both choosing and preparing for a new career.

Interests. Perhaps you’re considering a career change that better matches your interests with the work you do. Studies have found that people who are satisfied with their occupation share many interests with others in the same career who are equally satisfied. Tests known as interest inventories are available to help you narrow occupations based on these shared interests.

You might have little difficulty fitting your interests to a new career. Do you have a flair for creative use of space, for example? Becoming an interior designer might be an option. Have you always had a way with animals? Maybe it’s worthwhile looking into veterinary support occupations, such as veterinary technicians or assistants.

No matter what your interests, chances are that there’s an occupation that could put them to good use. It’s up to you to identify the ones that have the most potential for you that, along with your values and skills, could lead to a satisfying new career.

For more information—and support

This article presents some important things to consider when contemplating a career change. For more information about planning and making this change, visit your local library or career center. To find a career center near you, go to www.servicelocator.org; call toll free, 1 (877) US2-JOBS (872-5627) or TTY 1 (877) 889-5627; or e-mail info@careeronestop.org. The Web site also has links to career exploration tools and other job-related resources.

Career changers can find information on hundreds of occupations in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Along with details about the nature of the work, the *Handbook* provides training requirements, job outlook, working conditions, earnings, and employment. It is available in libraries, career centers, and online at www.bls.gov/ooh.

For wage and employment statistics for more than 800 occupations by industry and geographic area, visit the Occupational

Employment Statistics Web site at www.bls.gov/oes.

The *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* publishes articles related to career research, many of which are relevant for career changers. “Employment matchmakers: Pairing people and work,” online at www.bls.gov/ooq/2007/winter/art03.pdf, profiles professionals who specialize in matching workers with employers. “Getting back to work: Returning to the labor force after an absence,” online at www.bls.gov/ooq/2004/winter/art03.pdf, provides tips for relaunching a career—tips that may also help those changing careers. And guidance on writing effective job applications is provided in the recently updated “Résumés, applications, and cover letters” article, available elsewhere in this issue of the *Quarterly*.

But those sources aren’t the only ones available online from the U.S. Department of Labor. CareerOneStop, online at www.careeronestop.org, is a collection of resources for career planners and jobseekers. In addition to occupational information, this site directs users to education and training programs, as well as sources of scholarships and other financial aid. The Web site also provides information on job openings and improving job search skills, such as resume writing and interviewing.

The Occupational Information Network, or O*NET, database, online at www.online.onetcenter.org, provides detailed information about occupations and their attributes. The site includes interactive self-assessment tools for matching your work values, skills, and interests with specific occupations.

And a joint effort between the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education offers online resources for unemployed jobseekers. The Web site, www.opportunity.gov, has career search tools, training opportunity resources, financial aid information, and FAQ pages, along with links to the Departments of Labor and Education Web sites.

State and local governments are another valuable source of career guidance, and they can help you in your self-assessment. Community-based financial literacy programs

can help you evaluate your personal finances. And fee-based career counselors can guide you through the entire career change process. Information on finding a career counselor in your area is available on the Web site of the National Career Development Association at www.ncda.org.

For personal and professional support, networking is one of the keys to successfully changing careers. Colleagues, peers, and mentors are important sources of advice, job leads, training information, and other guidance. Your network should include people working in your prospective career, and you can meet these people by contacting or, if possible, joining professional associations for the occupation. Another way to expand your network is by contacting people from alumni associations for institutions you may have attended who are working in the field you wish to enter.

It is also important to consider what career counselor Román refers to as a “personal support system.” Career change is often a dramatic life change, and its success can depend on the support of your family and friends, as well as your community. OOQ





Info about construction careers

Want to build a career? Consider construction.

ConstructMyFuture.com is a Web site with details about occupations, training, and other information on working in the construction industry.

The site addresses three audiences: students, teachers, and parents. Some of the information—such as

profiles of construction occupa-

tions, including links to the BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook*—is the same for each audience. But other information is specific to the target group. For example, teachers can download lessons that use construction projects (building a bench, cement column, or stairs) to teach geometry and algebra.

Students can learn about construction careers, both through their own online exploration and with the help of their parents and teachers. Informative sections make construction training and projects accessible to prospective workers. Links to scholarships and financial aid, schools (by State, industry segment, and curriculum), and construction sites and projects assist students in narrowing their choices. And resources provide teachers and parents with a means for finding career fairs, job shadowing and internship opportunities, and other industry support.

The site is sponsored by organizations representing construction equipment manufacturing, distribution, and operating engineers. Check it out at www.constructmyfuture.com.



Women more likely to enroll—and stay—in college

Women have outnumbered men on college campuses for years. Not only are women more likely than men to enroll, they're inclined to stay in school, too.

According to a recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), women born between 1980 and 1984 were more likely than their male counterparts to be enrolled in college at ages 18, 19, 20, and 21. As the table shows, women's rates of enrollment ranged from 41 percent to 51 percent, while men's rates ranged from 29 percent to 39 percent.

This difference in college-enrollment rates stems from three factors: More women than men graduated from high school; among high school graduates, women more often attended college; and once enrolled in college, women were less likely than men to leave college between school years.

Data are from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997. This survey has followed a group of about 9,000 young people from the time they were ages 12–17 to the time they were ages 21–27. The survey collects information about many aspects of young people's lives. The most recent news release focuses on education, training, employment, and military service by characteristics such as sex, race, and ethnicity.

For more information, visit the BLS National Longitudinal Survey Program Web page at www.bls.gov/nls.

College enrollment rates of young adults during the October when they were ages 18–21, by sex and age, 1998–2006 (percent)

	Age			
	18	19	20	21
Women	41%	51	48	46
Men	29%	39	38	36

Revising the way high school classes are grouped

Simply stated, categorization is the placing of similar objects into similar groups. And the National Center for Education Statistics has updated its way of categorizing high school career/technical education (formerly called vocational education) classes.

The center's secondary school taxonomy groups together similar courses so analysts can study trends in students' choice of classes. This update helps analysts in making comparisons between sources of educational and career information. High school transcript studies can now relate career/technical education classes more closely to career clusters, the Standard Occupational Classification system, and the center's postsecondary course taxonomy, which is linked to the Classification of Instructional Programs.

For more information, contact Lisa Hudson at the National Center for Education Statistics by e-mailing lisa.hudson@ed.gov; writing to 1990 K St. NW., Washington, D.C. 20006; calling (202) 502-7358; or visiting online at nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes. To view the report about the update, click on nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008030.pdf.

College: How to choose

Students have a lot to think about when choosing a college. Now, there's a checklist that may help in the decision-making process.

ACT, maker of the college entrance exam by the same name, suggests 11 factors for students to consider when selecting a school. The factors are academics, including programs and majors offered by the school; admission requirements; costs; financial aid; size of the school; environment; activities, such as sports and clubs; location; housing; facilities, both academic and recreational; and campus tours.

Each student's situation and goals affect which of these factors are most important to him or her. Students should start by identifying the factors that will have the biggest influence on their decision, such as being close to home or the availability of a particular major, and then use those factors to compare and rank schools.

More helpful information for students is available at www.actstudent.org/college/factors.html. To contact ACT, write 500 ACT Drive, PO Box 168, Iowa City, IA 52243; or call (319) 377-1000.

Job loss: Health and retirement benefits

For workers facing job loss, uncertainty about the impact of unemployment on their benefits is a source of stress. To help these workers understand their options, the U.S. Department of Labor has created an online guide.

Workers who lose their jobs need to know how to protect the healthcare and retirement benefits to which they're entitled. For example, many workers can switch to a health insurance plan that is offered by a spouse's

employer—but they must do so within 30 days of losing eligibility for their previous coverage. And some unemployed workers might be able to continue participating in their former employer's plan, although usually at a higher cost.

Fact sheets and publications are available on the department's Web site. Information for employers, including posters and compliance assistance, is also on the site. The Web address is www.dol.gov/ebsa/publications/joblosstoolkit.html.

To learn more, contact the department's Employee Benefits Security Administration by writing to EBSA, Frances Perkins Building, 200 Constitution Ave. NW., Washington, DC 20210; calling toll free, 1 (866) 444-EBSA (3272); or sending an e-mail using the form provided at askebsa.dol.gov/contact_form_1.asp.



RÉSUMÉS, APPLICATIONS, AND COVER LETTERS

Olivia Crosby
(updated by
Drew Liming)

Olivia Crosby wrote this article while working in the Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, BLS. Drew Liming is an economist in that office and can be reached at (202) 691-5262 or liming.drew@bls.gov.

You have skills that employers want. But those skills won't get you a job if no one knows you have them.

Good résumés, applications, and cover letters broadcast your abilities. They tell employers how your qualifications match a job's responsibilities. If these critical preliminaries are constructed well, you have a better chance of landing interviews—and, eventually, a job.



The availability of personal computers and laser printers has raised employers' expectations of the quality of résumés and cover letters that applicants produce. E-mail and online applications help some employers sort and track hundreds of résumés. Technology has also given résumé writers greater flexibility; page limits and formatting standards are no longer as rigid as they were several years ago. "The only rule is that there are no rules," says Frank Fox, executive director of the Professional Association of Résumé Writers. "Résumés should be error free—no typos or spelling mistakes—but beyond that, use any format that conveys the information well."

However, the no-rules rule does not mean anything goes. You still have to consider what is reasonable and appropriate for the job you want. Advertisements for a single job opening can generate dozens, even hundreds, of responses. Busy reviewers often spend as little as 30 seconds deciding whether a résumé deserves consideration.

This article provides some guidelines for creating résumés and cover letters that will

help you pass the 30-second test and win interviews. The first section, on résumés, describes what information your résumé should contain, how to highlight your skills for the job you want, and types of résumés. The next section discusses the four parts of a cover letter—salutation, opening, body, and closing. A final section offers suggestions for learning more about résumés and cover letters. The box on page 21 provides advice on completing application forms.

Résumés: Marketing your skills

A résumé is a brief summary of your experience, education, and skills. It is a marketing piece, usually one or two pages long, designed to interest an employer. Good résumés match the jobseeker's abilities to the job's requirements. The best résumés highlight an applicant's strengths and accomplishments.

There are four main steps to creating a résumé: Compiling information about

yourself and the occupations that interest you, choosing a résumé format, adding style, and proofreading the final document. You may also want to prepare your résumé for e-mailing and for an online application form.

Gathering and organizing the facts

Start working on your résumé by collecting and reviewing information about yourself: previous positions, job duties, volunteer work, skills, accomplishments, education, and activities. These are the raw materials of your résumé. This is also a good time to review your career goals and to think about which past jobs you have liked, and why.

After compiling this information, research the occupations that interest you. Determine the duties they entail, credentials they require, and skills they use. Your résumé will use your autobiographical information to show that you meet a job's requirements.

You will probably need to write a different résumé for each job that interests you. Each résumé will emphasize what is relevant to one position. Remember: Even if you do not have many specialized and technical skills, most occupations also require abilities like reliability, teamwork, and communication. These are particularly important for entry-level workers.

The next step is to organize the personal information you have assembled. Most résumé writers use the following components.

Contact information. This includes your name; permanent and college campus addresses, if you are in school and your addresses differ; phone number; and e-mail address. Place your full legal name at the top of your résumé and your contact information underneath it. This information should be easy to see; reviewers who can't find your phone number can't call you for an interview. Also, make sure the outgoing message on your voicemail sounds professional. And remember to check your e-mail inbox regularly.

Qualifications summary. The qualifications summary, which evolved from the objective statement, is an overview designed to quickly answer the employer's question

“Why should I hire you?” It lists a few of your best qualifications and belongs below your contact information. A qualifications summary is optional. It can be particularly effective for applicants with extensive or varied experience because it prevents the important facts from being lost among the details.

Education. List all relevant training, certifications, and education on your résumé. Start with the most recent and work backward. For each school you have attended, list the school's name and location; diploma, certificate, or degree earned, along with year of completion; field of study; and honors received. If you have not yet completed one of your degrees, use the word expected before your graduation date. If you do not know when you will graduate, add “in progress” after the name of the unfinished degree.

The education section is especially important for recent graduates. Include your overall grade point average, average within major, or class standing, if it helps your case. The general guideline is to include averages of 3.0 and above, but the minimum useful average is still widely debated. Graduates should also consider listing relevant courses under a separate heading. Listing four to eight courses related to a particular occupation shows a connection between education and work. College graduates need not list their high school credentials.

Experience. Résumés should include your job history: The name and location of the organizations you have worked for, years you worked there, title of your job, a few of the duties you performed, and results you achieved. Also, describe relevant volunteer activities, internships, and school projects, especially if you have little paid experience.

When describing your job duties, emphasize results instead of responsibilities and performance rather than qualities. It is not enough, for example, to claim you are organized; you must use your experience to prove it.

Job descriptions often specify the scope of a position's duties—such as the number of phone lines answered, forms processed, or people supervised. If you worked on a project

Applications: Fitting yourself to the form

Many jobs require jobseekers to complete an application instead of submitting a résumé. But an application is a résumé in disguise: Its purpose is to show your qualifications. Assembling the following information about yourself in advance will make it easier to complete applications:

- **Identification.** Be prepared to give your name, address, phone number, and Social Security number. You may also need to bring proof of identification when you pick up and drop off the application.
- **Employment history.** List the month and year you started and ended each job; your supervisor's name, address, and phone number; your job title, location, salary, and major duties; and your reason for leaving.
- **Education and certification.** Know the name and city of the school you attended and the year you received your degree and the name, level, and award and renewal dates of certification.
- **Special skills.** List any special skills you have that are closely related to the job, such as computer applications, or equipment operation.
- **References.** Provide the names, phone numbers, and addresses of three or four people who have agreed to recommend you.

When you pick up an application, don't miss an opportunity to make a good first impression. Dress as you would for the job. Politely request two copies of the form, or make your own copies of the original before you start filling it out. Read the entire application before you begin. Then, use one copy as a rough draft and the other as the final product. Write neatly with black ink.

Answer every question on the application. Write "not applicable" or "none" if a question does not apply to you. Some reviewers suggest answering "will discuss in interview" if asked for information that might disqualify you.

Make a copy of your completed application. If you go back for an interview, take this record with you. Having a completed form will also make it easier to fill out the next one.

Although forms do not offer the same flexibility as a résumé, you can still find ways to highlight your best qualifications. For example, you can use strong action verbs to describe your duties. If you do not have paid experience, you can give job titles to your volunteer work or list relevant academic experience, substituting student for job titles.

Computer applications. If you are filling out an application for a computer database, you will want to use keywords and simple formatting. Put the most important information first. Include as much information as you can for each question without becoming wordy or repetitive. The more relevant details you provide, the better your chances of using a keyword that matches an employer's requirements. Before submitting the form, copy and paste your answers into a word-processing program so you can check the spelling.

with other people, tell the reviewer your accomplishments came from a team effort. Also, mention any promotions or increases in responsibility you received.

Use specific accomplishments to give your experience impact. Note any improvements you made, any time or money you saved, and any problems you solved—for example, were you praised for handling difficult customers? Were you always on time or available for overtime? Did you start a new program? Mention quantifiable results you accomplished, such as a 10-percent increase in sales, a 90-percent accuracy rate, a 25-percent increase in student participation, or an “A” grade.

Activities and associations. Activities can be an excellent source of experience, especially for students in high school or college who don’t have much work experience. Students can list their involvement in school or extracurricular activities as a way of showing a prospective employer their initiative.

Activities might include participation in organizations, associations, student government, clubs, or community activities, especially those related to the position you are applying for or that demonstrate hard work and leadership skills.

Special skills. If you have specific computer, foreign language, or technical skills, consider highlighting them by giving them their own category—even if they don’t relate directly to the occupation you’re pursuing. For jobs in information technology, for example, jobseekers may list programming and computer application skills in a separate section. But because most occupations now require computer skills, jobseekers in other fields also may list those skills separately.

Awards and honors. Include formal recognition you have received. Do not omit professional or academic awards. These are often listed with an applicant’s experience or education, but some list them at the end of their résumé.

References. Usually, résumés do not include names of references, but some reviewers suggest breaking this rule if the names are

recognizable in the occupation or industry. Some résumé writers end with the statement “References available upon request.” Others assume reference availability is understood and use that space for more important information. Regardless of whether you mention it on the résumé, you will need to create a separate reference sheet to provide when requested and to carry with you to interviews.

A reference sheet lists the name, title, office address, and phone number of three to five people who know your abilities. Before offering them as references, of course, make sure these people have agreed to recommend you. At the top of the sheet, type your name and contact information, repeating the format you used in your résumé.

Other personal information. Your résumé should include any other information that is important to your occupation, such as a completed portfolio or a willingness to travel. Your résumé is your own, and you should customize it to fit your needs. However, some information does not belong on a résumé. Do not disclose your health, disability, marital status, age, or ethnicity. This information is illegal for most employers to request.

Choosing a format

There are three main résumé formats—chronological, functional, and combination. Each is defined by the way it organizes your experience. Choose the one that shows your experience to its best advantage.

Chronological. This résumé type is the most common. It organizes your experience around the jobs you have held. This format is an excellent choice for people with steady work histories or previous jobs that relate closely to their career objective.

To create a chronological résumé, list each position you have held, starting with the most recent and working backward. For each position, give the title of your job, name of the organization you worked for, and years you worked there. Next, relate the duties and accomplishments of that job. When describing jobs, use action statements, not sentences. Instead of writing “I managed a fundraising

Sample chronological résumé

Elizabeth Smith

Current Address

1016 Campus Drive, Room 312
College Town, LS 41112
(453) 555-5555
Smith@LS.edu

Permanent Address

1510 Park Street
Hamlet, LS 41112
(454) 555-5555
Smith@somewhere.com

Horizontal lines help
define different sections

Qualifications Summary

Proven communications skills and experience creating promotions for wide audiences.

Education

University of Large State

Bachelor of Arts, English, expected 2010
Minor: Business
G.P.A.: 3.5/4.0, English Honors Society

Students often list
education before
experience

Related Courses

Public Relations	The Language of Advertising
Marketing	Writing for Mass Media
Consumer Behavior	Writing for Business

Coursework relating to
the position applied for

Experience

Program Coordinator

Campus Activities Council, Large State University

- Initiated and organized the Campus Run for Charity
- Promoted event with fliers, e-mail, newspaper ads, and campus radio station announcements
- 1,000 students participated

Show results

08-present
Most recent job first

Campus Tour Guide

Office of Recruiting, Large State University

- Led weekly tours for prospective students and parents
- Answered questions and addressed concerns
- Wrote information sheet explaining campus-housing policy
- Selected to train new guides

06-07
Give approximate
dates of employment

Bullets
emphasize
accomplishments

Administrative Assistant

ABC Business, Harristown, Large State

- Drafted correspondence
- Prepared and edited reports
- Complimented for accuracy and attention to detail

summers, 05 and 06

Separate section
for special skills

Foreign Language Skills

Fluent in Spanish

References available on request

Statement sometimes omitted

campaign,” write, “Managed a fundraising campaign.” Use strong verbs to begin each statement.

Be specific, but not overly detailed, in describing what you did. Employers say three to five statements are usually sufficient for each job. And no job should have more than four consecutive lines of information under it; large blocks of text are difficult to read. If you must use more space, find some way to divide the information into categories.

Your most important positions should occupy the most space on your résumé. If you’ve had jobs that do not relate to the position you want, consider dividing your experience into two categories: Relevant experience and other experience. Describe the relevant jobs thoroughly, and briefly mention the others. If you have had many jobs, you probably do not need to mention the oldest or least important ones. Just be careful not to create damaging gaps in your work history. For a sample chronological résumé, see page 23.

Because the chronological format emphasizes dates and job titles, it is often a poor format for career changers, people with inconsistent work histories, or new entrants to the work force. For these applicants, the functional résumé is a better choice.

Functional. The functional résumé organizes your experience around skills rather than job titles. This format is ideal for students who have some work history, but not in positions that relate directly to the job they want. Organizing experiences around skills can connect less relevant jobs to career qualifications; a job waiting tables, for example, can be combined with other responsibilities to show organizational and customer service skills.

To create a functional résumé, identify three or four skills required for your target job. For each skill, identify three to five concrete examples to demonstrate that ability. Again, use action phrases—not complete sentences—when writing your list.

Arrange your skill headings in order of importance. If you have a specific vacancy announcement, match the arrangement of

your headings to that of its listed requirements. The closer the match between your skill headings and the reviewer’s expectations, the more qualified you seem.

The last part of the functional résumé is a brief work history. Write only job titles, company names, and employment years. If you have gaps in your work history, you could use the cover letter to explain them, or you could fill them by adding volunteer work, community activities, or family responsibilities to your job list. For a sample functional résumé, see the facing page.

Combination. This format combines the best of the chronological format with the best of the functional format. Combination résumés are as varied as the histories they summarize. One variation begins with a chronological format but then subdivides each job description into skill categories. Another variation uses a functional format but, for each example of a skill, identifies the organization where the example occurred.

Adding style

You will create a good impression if your résumé is attractive and easy to read. An inviting style draws attention to your qualifications. If you take pity on the reviewer’s eyes, chances are better that he or she will spend more time reviewing your résumé—and will remember it better.

To make your résumé easier to read and copy, print it on high-quality white or lightly colored paper. Loud, garish colors may attract attention, but they risk creating an unprofessional impression. Also, use a laser printer and keep the font size at 10 point or above. The reviewer shouldn’t have to struggle to read your words.

Design. Good résumé writers use design elements strategically. Boldface, large type, capital letters, centering, or horizontal lines make headings stand out on the page. Bullets or italics can draw attention to key accomplishments. One-inch margins around the page and blank lines between sections will make all the information easier to see.

Sample functional résumé

Sarah Jones
1310 Rock Ledge Street
Hamlet, Large State 41112
(455) 555-5555

Leave adequate
margins on all sides

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

Strong customer service, administrative, and communication skills to improve workplace efficiency.

EDUCATION

Bold capital letters
emphasize major headings

Large State Community College
A.A. in Liberal Arts, expected May 2010
G.P.A.: 3.6/4.0

Hamlet High School
Diploma, May 2007
G.P.A.: 3.3/4.0

EXPERIENCE

Customer Service

Selected for the express lane while working as a cashier
Directed customers to product locations
Served restaurant patrons and responded quickly to requests
Handled food substitutions and special requests efficiently

Identify
major
skills
required
for the
position

Administration

Recorded meeting notes and maintained membership roster for College Outdoors Club
Calculated restaurant customers' bills accurately

Communication

Explained menu items to customers
Relayed special requests to chef
Received A's in speech and composition classes

Include specific
achievements

Computer Applications

Excel, Word, Windows XP

Begin statements
with action verbs

WORK HISTORY

Brief work history
goes at the end

Table Server, Good Food Restaurant, Hamlet, Large State, 2008
Cashier, Blue Skies Chain Store, Hamlet, Large State, 2006-2007

References available upon request

Any graphics you use should be consistent with your occupation's standards. Graphics appropriate for one occupation might be inappropriate for another. As a general rule, small design elements—such as a border or a name and address printed in letterhead style—are fine. But large, bold graphics are risky for an accountant who isn't applying for a position as a graphic artist

To give your résumé a consistent flow, maintain the same style from beginning to end. Every section should have the same design elements. For example, if your education heading is bold and centered, every heading should be bold and centered. In the same way, chose one typeface, such as Arial or Times New Roman, and use it throughout.

When you have finished, hold your résumé at arm's length and examine it. Make sure the type is easy to read and that the material lays out evenly on the page. You may need to experiment with different styles before deciding which you like best.

Length. A long résumé is difficult for a reviewer to read and remember; and, given the volume of résumés many reviewers receive, long résumés are often ignored. Although rules about length are more flexible than they once were, general guidelines still exist. Most students and recent graduates use a one-page résumé, other workers use one or two pages, and the very experienced use two or three pages. If your résumé doesn't match this pattern, it probably contains unnecessary words or irrelevant information. Eliminate anything that does not help prove you're qualified for the job.

Proofreading

Take time to prepare the best résumé you can. You might not be the most qualified candidate for every job, but your résumé might be better than the competition. The most common mistakes are simple typographical and spelling errors. Computer spelling checkers do not catch correctly spelled words used incorrectly—"of" for "on," for example, or "their" for "there." You want your résumé to stand out, but not for the wrong reasons. Avoid

mistakes by having several people proofread your résumé for you.

Before you send out a résumé, review the vacancy announcement and fine-tune your résumé to meet employers' criteria. Sprinkle your résumé with language found in the position description, paying special attention to your qualifications summary if you have one.

Cover letters: Introducing yourself

Every résumé you send, fax, or e-mail needs its own cover letter. Sending a résumé without a cover letter is like starting an interview without shaking hands. The best cover letters spark the employer's interest and create an impression of competence.

Cover letters are an opportunity to convey your focus and energy. Especially for students who may not have a lot of experience, the cover letter is a way to show enthusiasm. And following up with a phone call shows the employer drive and interest. Although you should feel free to consult references and models, use your own words when writing a cover letter; don't mimic another person's writing style.

Parts of the cover letter

Cover letters should be written in standard business format with your and the reviewer's addresses at the top and your signature above your typed name at the bottom. (E-mailed cover letters do not include mailing addresses.) All letters should be single spaced, flush left, with each paragraph followed by a blank line. Use professional, polite words. Revealing your personality is fine, as long as your style conforms to business protocol. For a sample cover letter, see the facing page.

Most cover letters are two or three paragraphs long. Every cover letter should fit on one page and contain the following four parts: Salutation, opening, body, and conclusion.

Salutation. Whenever possible, send your letter to a specific person rather than to an office. Consider how differently you respond to a letter addressed to you, as opposed to one

Sample cover letter

John Ryan
15 Spring Road
Hamlet, LS 41112
(545) 555-5555

January 5, 2009

Mr. Brian Carson
Hiring Manager
Rest Easy Hotel
Hamlet, LS 41112

Addresses are omitted for
e-mailed cover letters

Letter is addressed to a specific
individual, if possible

State position
applied for

Dear Mr. Carson:

The management trainee position you advertised in today's *Hamlet Gazette* greatly interests me. The Rest Easy Hotels have always served as landmarks for me when I travel, and I would like to contribute to their continued growth. I have enclosed my résumé for your review.

Sell
yourself

In May, I will be graduating from Large State University with a degree in business. While in school, I developed strong organizational and customer service skills. As a dormitory assistant, I organized events, led meetings, and assisted students. As treasurer of the Business Society, I maintained the budget and presented budget reports. My summer jobs also required extensive interaction with the public. I believe these experiences have prepared me for your management trainee position.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my qualifications more fully in an interview. I can be reached at (545) 555-5555. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Place your phone
number near the end

Request an interview

John Ryan

Sign each letter

John Ryan

Enclosure

addressed to “Occupant.” If you do not know whom to write, call the company and ask who is hiring for the position. Check that the name you use is spelled correctly and the title is accurate. Pay close attention to the Mr. or Ms. before gender-neutral names. Finally, use a colon after the name, not a comma.

Opening. The first few sentences of your cover letter should tell the reviewer which job you are applying for and the connection you have to the company. If someone the reviewer knows suggested you apply, mention that recommendation. If you are responding to an advertisement, refer to it and the source that published it.

Your knowledge of the company might give you another opportunity to connect yourself to the job. You could briefly describe your experience with its products, cite a recent company success, or refer to an article written about the company. But don’t go overboard; save specifics for the interview.

Body. The next portion of your cover letter is a brief explanation of your qualifications. Don’t simply repeat your résumé; summarize your most relevant qualifications or provide additional details about a noteworthy accomplishment. Address the employer’s requirements directly, and don’t be afraid to use special formatting to your advantage. You might, for example, create a chart matching the employer’s requirements on one side to your qualifications on the other.

You can also use the body of your cover letter to address gaps in your work history or other problems evident on your résumé. But do not volunteer negative information unless you must. Always maintain a positive, confident tone.

Closing. In your final paragraph, thank the reviewer, request an interview, and repeat your home phone number. The closing is your chance to show commitment to the job. If you tell the reviewer you plan to call, make sure you do it. Making the effort to call and follow up helps to keep your name in the mind of your interviewer.

Submitting your qualifications

You introduce yourself to prospective employers through both your cover letter and your résumé. Because first impressions are usually lasting ones, make sure yours is a good one by proofreading your cover letter as carefully as you do your résumé.

When sending your résumé through postal service mail, consider how it will look when it arrives on a reviewer’s desk. Hastily stuffed, illegibly addressed, and sloppily sealed envelopes do nothing to enhance your image as a neat, would-be professional.

When submitting a résumé through e-mail, it’s best to put the cover letter as the body of the e-mail. The résumé should either follow the cover letter in the body in plain text or be a separate attachment, depending on the reviewer’s preferences.

For more information

Learn more about writing résumés and cover letters by consulting the many sources of information available on both subjects. One of the best places to go is your local library, where you can read a variety of books that match your needs and preferences. Some books give general advice and instruction, some address specific problems or occupations, and others are a compendium of sample résumés and cover letters. Be careful to choose recently published books; résumé standards change with time.

Look in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* for information about the job duties, working conditions, and training requirements of many occupations. The *Handbook* is available online at www.bls.gov/ooh and can also be found in most libraries and career centers. And for tips on preparing to re-enter the workforce, including how to explain gaps in work history, see “Getting back to work: Returning to the labor force after an absence,” in the winter 2004–05 *Quarterly* and online at www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2004/winter/art03.pdf.

Also, it may be helpful to visit the counselors at your school, career center, or State employment office. They have resources and advice to help you choose an occupation; write résumés, cover letters, and applications; and develop a job searching strategy. State employment offices offer free advice and computer access to people who are unemployed. To find a State office near you, visit online at www.servicelocator.org or call toll free, 1 (877) 348-0502.

The Internet is full of résumé writing advice—but remember, Web sites are not filtered for accuracy or timeliness. Some established sites are:

- JobSmart: Résumés and Cover Letters, jobstar.org/tools/resume/index.php
- The Riley Guide, www.rileyguide.com

- Rebecca Smith's Electronic Résumés, www.eresumes.com

- The Quintessential Guide to Career Resources, www.quintcareers.com

Another option is a commercial résumé writing service. The Professional Association of Résumé Writers, established in 1990, has about 1,000 member companies. For a fee, professional résumé writers help jobseekers write résumés and cover letters. Many of these professionals offer student rates, but fees may be higher for people with longer work histories. For a list of association members, visit the association Web site at www.parw.com or write:

The Professional Association of
Résumé Writers
1388 Brightwaters Blvd., NE.
St. Petersburg, FL 33704

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You're a what?

Voice actor

When Tony Oliver was in high school, he and a friend enjoyed muting the television and making funny voices to accompany the onscreen action. One afternoon, his friend's mom told them to stop goofing around, asking, "Do you think anyone will ever pay you for this?" Little did she know that both boys would one day pitch their vocal creativity as professional voice actors.

Voice actors help to bring our favorite cartoon and video game characters to life. They also do voice-overs for radio and television commercials and movie trailers. Even though you don't see them, these actors use the sound of their voice to sell a character's emotions—or an advertised product.

Tony was first introduced to voice acting when he was trying to find work as a stage actor in Los Angeles. He saw a newspaper ad for a voice-acting gig and, after completing that job, was able to land work on numerous similar projects. These jobs were Tony's introduction to a side of show business he hadn't known existed. "In voice acting," he says, "I found this secret enclave of acting you could get paid for that no one knew about."

For professional voice actors like Tony, a busy workday might include multiple recording sessions, each several hours long. Before the session, voice actors meet with the director and are given the script they'll read. Voice actors rarely have an opportunity to read scripts in advance and must be able to produce high-quality material without practicing the lines.

After speaking with the director, a voice actor enters the sound studio where the recording sessions take place. Most studios

consist of two rooms: a recording booth and a control room. In the booth, the voice actor, either alone or with other voice actors, reads through the script line by line. The director and a sound engineer listen from the control room and provide feedback between takes.

For most professional voice actors, getting hired requires versatility in addition to a pleasant voice. Most voice actors use a number of voices and accents for various characters. Some actors have enough voices to play multiple roles on the same project.

New voices take work to create. Tony has found that the best inspiration is usually people he overhears. "A lot of creating new voices is mimicry," he says. "Sometimes, you don't even realize what you have until a director gives you a new character and something you've been playing around with pops out of you."

Even after developing new voices, regular practice is essential. Voice actors must be able to re-create or tweak a voice at a director's request. Practice also helps to prevent strained throats and to maintain vocal range. Tony, a trained singer, gives his voice a musical workout almost every day; other voice actors find different ways to practice.

Becoming a successful voice actor, like other jobs in entertainment, requires strong networking skills. The voice-acting community is relatively small and can be difficult to break into. Frequently submitting demo tapes to directors and auditioning for them is vital, especially for newcomers. "It can be hard getting those first few roles," Tony says. "Directors don't want to take a chance on a voice actor they don't know."

Drew Liming

Drew Liming is an economist in the Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, BLS. He is available at (202) 691-5262 or liming.drew@bls.gov.

From ads to animation, Tony Oliver speaks for his supper.

Many professional voice actors have also been trained as stage actors. A background in stage acting, although not mandatory, provides performance experience and teaches voice actors how to develop characters. Like stage actors, voice actors create a character for their audience. Unlike stage actors, however, voice actors can't rely on their physical movements or facial expressions to connect with the audience.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does not specifically track the employment or wages of voice actors. Voice actors are grouped with other types of actors, including those who work on stage, in television, and in motion pictures. Some voice actors also work in these other mediums.

Although opportunities for voice actors are available throughout the country, work is easiest to find where the studios are clustered. Like the rest of the entertainment industry, most voice actors are concentrated in southern California. But many also work in large cities, such as Houston and New York.

Anecdotal information suggests that voice actors are usually paid by the hour. Typical rates for a recording session are between \$300 and \$500 for the first hour and between \$200 and \$350 for each subsequent hour. Voice actors working on longer projects might negotiate their own rates.

But voice actors freelance, which means they are self-employed and often have inconsistent work schedules. Some long-term jobs are available to actors voicing a main character in a cartoon show for an entire season or series. In most jobs, however, a voice actor's services may be required for only a single recording session. "When business is booming,

you're working all the time," says Tony. "And when it's not, you're on the phone trying to hustle up work."

Still, freelancing allows voice actors to choose the productions and characters they're interested in auditioning for. Tony enjoys this creative freedom. "When work is going well," he says, "I have a lot of control over what's happening in my life."

Being able to make a career out of something he enjoys satisfies Tony. "If it weren't my job, I'd take up acting as a hobby," he says. "I love that I get paid to do something I'd do for free."

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Occupational employment of workers without disabilities and workers with disabilities, April 2009

About 5.4 million people with disabilities were employed in April, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. These workers represent about 4 percent of total employment.

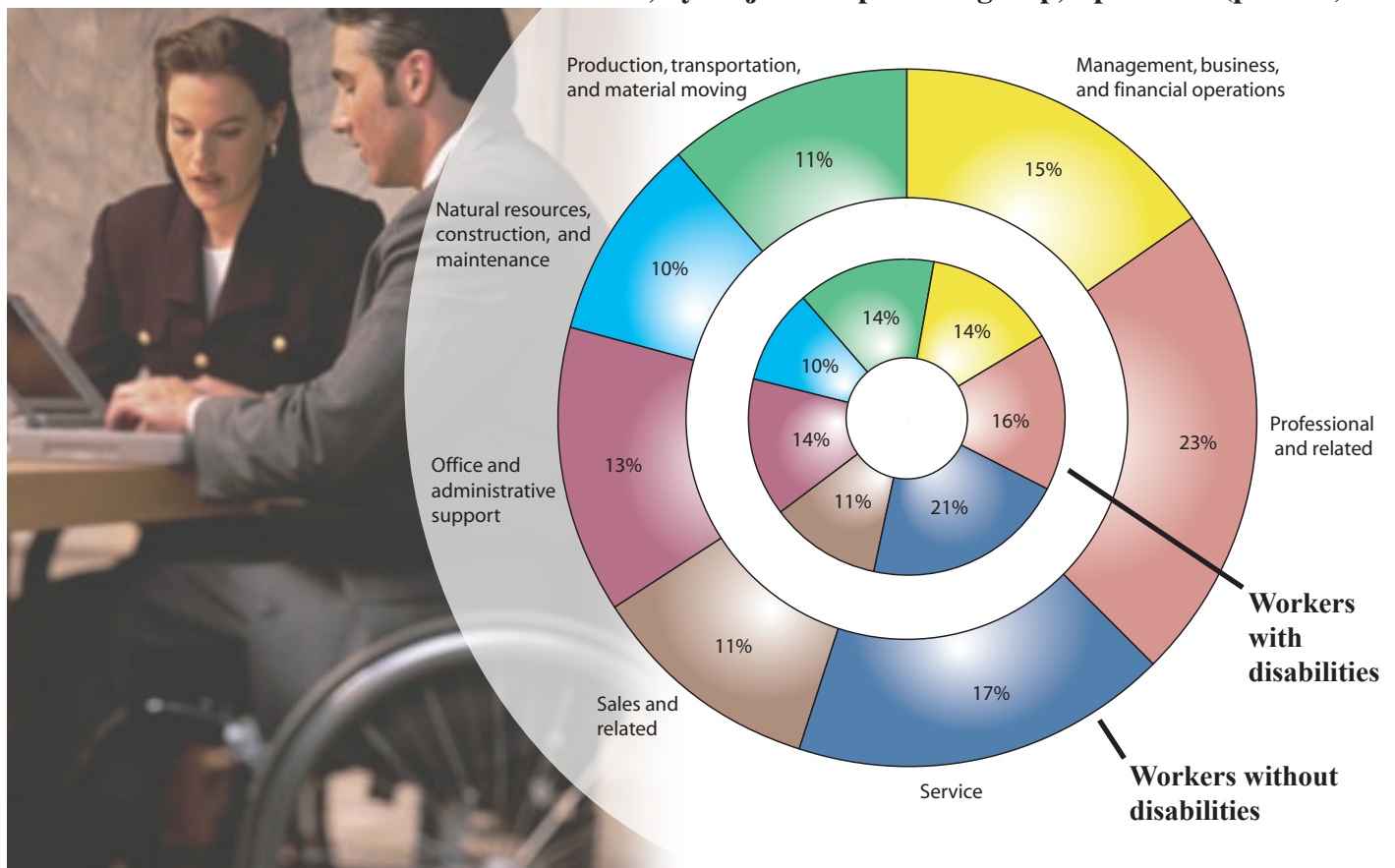
As the charts show, workers with disabilities were distributed across occupational groups in a way similar to those without disabilities. Notable differences existed in the share of each type of worker in two occupational groups. The percentage of workers with disabilities employed in service occupations was somewhat higher than the percentage of workers without disabilities. And in professional and related occupations, the share of workers without disabilities was notably higher than workers with disabilities. However, these two occupational groups also employed the largest share of both

types of workers.

Data in the chart come from the Current Population Survey. According to the data, 23 percent of people with disabilities were in the labor force in April, which means that they were either working or looking for work. About 13 percent of people with disabilities in the labor force were unemployed that month, compared with the almost 9 percent unemployment rate for workers without disabilities.

For more information, visit www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm or contact the Division of Labor Force Statistics by writing to 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE., Suite 4675, Washington, DC 20212; calling (202) 691-6378; or sending an e-mail using the link provided on the Web site.

Employment distribution of workers without disabilities and workers with disabilities, by major occupational group, April 2009 (percent)



Occupational Outlook Quarterly archives



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RÉSUMÉS, APPLICATIONS, AND COVER LETTERS

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