

Finding your first job

Moderate · A few hours a week until you're hired · Free; never pay a fee to apply

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A simple resume (one page is plenty)
- ☐ Three people who agree to be references
- ☐ A professional-sounding email address
- ☐ A phone with voicemail set up
- ☐ A list or spreadsheet to track applications

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Tell people you're looking.** CareerOneStop, the Labor Department's career site, says about half of all new jobs are found through connections, and many openings are never posted.
- 2 **Search your state's job bank.** Every state has one.
- 3 **Search smart on any job site.** Try several keywords, use filters, sort newest first, and read postings in your field to see which skills employers want and what they pay.
- 4 **Check the employer's own website.** When you find a job you like, look for it on the company's site.
- 5 **Get free in-person help.** American Job Centers help people search for jobs, find training and answer employment questions, and there are centers nationwide.
- 6 **Write a one-page resume.** Put your name, address, phone and email at the top, then your 3 or 4 top skills or accomplishments, any jobs, your education, and volunteer work, sports or clubs that show responsibility.
- 7 **No experience?** Count what you've done.
- 8 **Line up references before you apply.** Most employers ask for three, either when you apply or at the interview.
- 9 **Apply, then write it down.** Keep a record of every job you apply to, because postings can disappear after the deadline and you'll want the details if they call you for an interview.
- 10 **Get ready for the call.** Practice answers to common interview questions.

Watch out A real employer will never ask you to pay before you're hired. Don't put your Social Security number, credit card or bank account on an application. If a "job" involves depositing a check and sending some of the money back, it's a scam: the check will bounce and the bank will want you to repay it. See Job scams and how to spot them.

DAD NOTE *Every manager you'll ever meet started with a first job. Show up on time, look them in the eye, and say you want to learn.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/work/finding-work/finding-your-first-job/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: CareerOneStop (U.S. Department of Labor); Federal Trade Commission; U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division; U.S. Department of Labor, YouthRules!.