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Navigating Unemployment

A Guidebook for your Career Search

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| § 1. Introduction..... | 1 |
| § 2. Unemployment Insurance | 2 |
| § 2.1. Eligibility for Unemployment Insurance | 2 |
| § 2.2. Filing an Initial Claim for Unemployment Benefits | 4 |
| § 2.3. Filing a Continued Claim for Unemployment Benefits | 5 |
| § 2.4. Options for if you are about to exhaust unemployment | 6 |
| § 3. The Job Hunt..... | 8 |
| § 3.1. Tips for the Job Hunt | 8 |
| § 3.2. Career Fairs..... | 10 |
| § 3.3. Breaking into a Field: Informational Interview | 11 |
| § 3.3.1. Informational Interview Questions | 12 |
| § 4. Advice on Your Résumé | 14 |
| § 4.1. What Does a Résumé Accomplish? | 14 |
| § 4.2. Identifying and Explaining Job Skills..... | 15 |
| § 4.3. Building Your Résumé | 20 |
| § 4.3.1. Types of Résumés | 20 |
| § 4.3.2. General Guide to an Effective Résumé..... | 22 |
| § 4.4. Sample Résumés | 25 |
| § 4.4.1 Reverse-Chronological Résumé..... | 25 |
| § 4.4.2. Functional Résumé..... | 26 |
| § 5. Letters | 27 |
| § 5.1. Informational Interview Request Letters | 27 |
| § 5.2. Cover Letters..... | 28 |
| § 5.3. Cover Letter Checklist | 29 |
| § 5.4. Common Cover Letter Mistakes | 30 |
| § 5.5. Thank You Letters | 31 |
| § 5.6. Acceptance and Decline Letters..... | 32 |
| § 5.7. Email Letters..... | 32 |
| § 6. The Interview | 33 |
| § 6.1. Types of Interviews..... | 33 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| § 6.2. The Interview Structure | 34 |
| § 6.3. Interviewing Strategies | 35 |
| § 6.3.1. Before the Interview..... | 36 |
| § 6.3.2. During the Interview | 37 |
| § 6.3.3. After the Interview | 40 |
| § 6.3.4. Illegal Questions | 41 |
| § 6.4. Additional Advice | 41 |
| § 6.5. Interview Questions | 44 |
| § 7. Job Search supports..... | 48 |
| § 7.1. CT Works..... | 48 |
| § 7.2. Helpful Websites..... | 50 |
| § 7.2.1. Résumé Assistance..... | 50 |
| § 7.2.2. Job/Career Guides | 50 |
| § 7.2.3. Job Searches..... | 51 |
| § 7.2.4. Avoiding Online Job Scams..... | 54 |
| § 7.2.5. Helps For Those With Disabilities..... | 56 |
| Index..... | 58 |

Navigating Unemployment

§ 1. Introduction

This book will help you to open new doors by utilizing a wide range of techniques and resources meant to augment and improve upon your ability to search for and find employment. It will help you develop and examine your current job skills, resume, and cover letter. It will give you advice on interview types and techniques. It will present websites and resources meant to assist you as you find a job. These are all essential elements to finding and keeping a job and exploring new career options.

This section closely follows the programs offered at *CTWorks*. In fact, much of the material comes directly from the Department of Labor Website (links to the *CTWorks* and Department of Labor Website are provided to aid the reader). Stop in and visit your local *CTWorks*. There, career counselors and professional resume writers from the Connecticut Department of Labor can assist you in your job search. In addition, visit the Department of Labor's website at www.ct.gov/dol for more helps and tools to finding a job.

You can find additional help on your own, including courses in résumé writing and information on jobs, careers, education, and training by visiting the Connecticut Jobs & Career ConneCTion website, at www.ctjobandcareer.org or at your local CT Works office. For a complete list of educational and training providers, please visit www.cttraining.info. For your job search, visit the Connecticut's Job Bank website at www.jobcentral.org/ct and use the list of job-search websites in § 7.2.3. On these sites you can browse jobs and post your resume to be viewed by employers throughout Connecticut. Another place for a job search is www.craigslist.org. However, be wary when visiting this site, if an add asks you to pay to get a job or to start-up, it is likely a scam. See the section § 7.2.4. for more information concerning online scams. Also visit <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ctworks/pos-recruit.html> for when employers will be conducting interviews at your local CT Works. However, it is important to understand the environment you are in. Detailed information on your local job market can be found at your local *CTWorks*. Use this information to find out where you should target your job search.

This book is divided into seven sections: Section § 1. is this introduction. § 2. will guide you through applying for unemployment, then offer some resources for those about to exhaust unemployment or do not have the option of unemployment. § 3. presents you with starting advice on how to search for a new career. Section § 4. will advise you on how to write a résumé and how to use it effectively. § 5. gives you important details on composing letters, including cover letters. In § 6. you will learn about the job interview, its structure, questions, and what to don and not to do. Finally, see § 7. for important supports and websites to exploit as you search for a career. All sections give both basic advice as well as detailed information. By reading and using this book you will acquire all the information you need to find not only a job, but a career that you enjoy.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 2. Unemployment Insurance

This section provides you with advice on whether you are eligible for unemployment ([§ 2.1.](#)), how to apply for unemployment insurance ([§ 2.2.](#)), to continue your claim ([§ 2.3.](#)), and some advice for those about to go off unemployment ([§ 2.4.](#)).

§ 2.1. Eligibility for Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment insurance provides temporary income to workers who, through no fault of their own, are unemployed and actively seeking employment, awaiting recall, or in an approved training program. This insurance is provided at no cost to the worker: it is paid for by the employer. However, unemployment insurance does have some eligibility restrictions. You must be:

- Fully or partially unemployed.
- Unemployed through no fault of your own
- Physically and mentally able to work and available for work as defined by law.
- Registered with the Career Center.
- Actively seeking work by making reasonable efforts to find employment each week (or be excused from this requirement because of your participation in approved training).
- Participating in selected reemployment services if you are identified as a dislocated worker by the enhanced reemployment services system.
- Filing your weekly claims as directed.

These restrictions are explained in further detail at www.ct.gov/dol.

Employment Not Covered by Unemployment

Most forms of employment are covered by unemployment insurance. However, those that are not covered by unemployment are:

- Newspaper carriers under age 18 who deliver to customers.
- Insurance agents (except industrial life insurance agents).
- Real estate persons paid only by commission.
- Sole proprietors and partners.
- Children under 21 employed by a parent and anyone employed by his or her spouse.
- Certain religious or church related employment.
- Work in Connecticut covered under the unemployment compensation law of another state.
- Railroad workers (railroads are self-insured).
- Outside sales representatives of a for-profit travel agency.

If you quit your job

If you quit your job, a hearing will be granted to determine your eligibility for unemployment. There must be a good reason for you to quit, such as a change in the working environment that adversely affected

Navigating Unemployment

you. If you are disqualified, you will receive a letter explaining why you are ineligible. Benefits may be awarded if you quit your job for the following reasons:

- You left work to care for a spouse, child or parent with an illness or disability
- You left work because your means of transportation to and from work (other than your personally owned vehicle) has been discontinued, provided no reasonable alternative transportation is available
- You accepted other employment while on a layoff from your regular work and then left that other employment when you were recalled to your former job
- you left work that was outside your regular apprenticeable trade to return to work in your regular apprentice able trade
- You left work solely because of governmental regulation or statute
- You left part time work to accept full-time work
- You left work to protect yourself or a child, spouse or parent from becoming or remaining a victim of domestic violence, provided you made reasonable efforts to preserve your employment
- You left your job to accompany a spouse who is required to relocate while on active duty with the United States Armed force
- You left your job on or after April 15, 2009 to accompany a spouse to a place from which it is impractical to commute due to a change in location of your spouse's employment

Dependent Eligibility

You may be eligible for a dependency allowance of \$15 weekly for each child (including step-child or child for whom you act as guardian) for whom you are the whole or main support, and who falls into one of the following categories:

- Under 18 years of age
- Under 21 years of age and a full-time student
- A mentally or physically handicapped child of any age

Either the mother or father of a child may collect the dependency allowance. However, if both parents receive benefits for the same week, only one may receive an allowance for the child. You may be eligible for a dependency allowance of \$15 for your spouse if, at the beginning of your benefit year, your spouse is unemployed, lives in the same household with you, and:

- Has not worked during the past three months; **or**
- Is pregnant; **or**
- Has a mental or physical disability expected to last for a long or indefinite time

Total dependency allowance cannot be paid for more than five dependents (\$75).

Please bear in mind that this is only a partial list of eligibility criteria. For more detail or additional questions, visit www.ct.gov/dol.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 2.2. Filing an Initial Claim for Unemployment Benefits

To apply for Unemployment Insurance, an initial claim must be completed by telephone or over the internet. This should be done as soon as you are separated from your employment. The web page for filing over the Internet is <https://sso.ctdol.state.ct.us/English/CommonLogin/CommonLogin.aspx>. Any claim for benefits begins with the Sunday of the week in which you call in your claim. You may collect the equivalent of 26 weeks of total unemployment benefits on a claim, which is in effect for a one-year period

- To file for unemployment, call your local service number, found at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/unemplt/tele-benphone.htm> and follow the prompts.
 - Hours for making an initial claim are Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.
- Initially you will be prompted to enter 1 for instructions in English or 2 for Spanish. If there are any announcements concerning unemployment benefits, you will hear them at this time.
- You will then be given five options at the main menu:
 1. Continued Claim Filing
 2. Account Status Inquiry
 3. Initial Claim Filing
 4. Employer Information
 5. General information.
 - Enter 3 for initial claims. As the initial claims office is extremely busy, you will in all likelihood not be connected to the system right away.
 - If you hear the words “**Due to...**” hang up and call back right away. Continue calling until you are connected to the system.
- You will then be prompted to enter your Social Security Number and Your PIN Number.
 - An initial claim requires the creation of a four digit PIN number which will be used when filing for your weekly claim. Simply follow the prompts and create the PIN when asked.
 - Remember, your PIN number has the same legal standing as your signature when filing for unemployment.
- You will be asked 20 questions and then speak to a customer service representative who will gather additional information and guide you through the process.
 - If you are unable to answer, or unsure about, any of the questions, a customer service representative is available to help you.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 2.3. Filing a Continued Claim for Unemployment Benefits

- To file for unemployment, call your local service number, found at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/unemplt/tele-benphone.htm> and follow the prompts.
- Hours for continued claims are:
 - Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
 - Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- Remember, you must file your claim weekly in order to continue your benefits.
- Initially you will be prompted to enter 1 for instructions in English or 2 for Spanish. If there are any announcements concerning unemployment benefits, you will hear them at this time.
- You will then be given five options at the main menu:
 1. Continued Claim Filing
 2. Account Status Inquiry
 3. Initial Claim Filing
 4. Employer Information
 5. General information.
 - enter 1 for continued claims
- You will then be prompted to enter your Social Security Number and PIN number.
- Upon entering your Social Security number and PIN number, you will be asked these questions, which you must answer truthfully and continue with any follow up questions:
 1. Were you able to work, available for work and actively seeking full-time work?
 2. Did you refuse an offer of work or rehire, quit a job or get discharged from a job?
 3. Did you receive your first payment from a pension other than Social Security which you have not already reported or was there a change in the amount previously reported?
 4. Did you start school, college or training, which you have not already reported to the Labor Department?
 5. Did you receive vacation pay, severance pay or workers' compensation benefits, not previously reported to the Labor Department?
 6. Did you work full-time or part-time for an employer or in self-employment or return to full-time work during the week ending last Saturday, which you have not already reported? (If you have returned to full-time work, contact a TeleBenefits Line representative.)
 7. Did you change your mailing address since you last filed a claim? Answer "yes" to this question only if you have not yet notified the Labor Department of this change. If you change your mailing address, speak to a TeleBenefits Line customer service representative as soon as possible so that any benefits due you are not delayed.
- If you did find short term employment, part time employment, or were dismissed from a new job, you may still be eligible for unemployment. You have up to 26 weeks of unemployment insurance within a one year period from your initial claim. This is not annulled or nullified when you find work. Ask at your local CT works or visit www.ct.gov/dol for more information.

Select option 2 at the main menu to receive the status of your unemployment check. You will be prompted to enter your Social Security Number and your PIN number.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 2.4. Options for if you are about to exhaust unemployment¹

If you have or are about to exhaust unemployment insurance benefits, have exhausted unemployment benefits, or are just looking for work, please consider these services:

- Visit a CT Works Career Center- These offices offer no-cost workshops, career counselors, résumé assistance, computers, Internet access, referral services, and more. Use these direct links to specific services:
 - Offices can be found at: www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ContactInfo/CTWorks/Directory.htm
 - Workshops (www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ctworks/cldrloc.htm): Attend free workshops offered at your local *CTWorks* Career Centers. Workshops may include Résumé Writing, Interviewing Techniques, and Job Search.
 - View a Complete Listing of Job Seeker Information and Services (www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/JobSeekers.htm)
- Visit CT JobCentral (www.jobcentral.org/ct/), the Labor Department's no-cost electronic job bank. You can post a résumé, search for jobs, access career sites, research companies, utilize interview tips, and much more. Services include:
 - Job Search - To search for job openings and apply for employment positions. A search can be conducted in this manner:
 - Enter the type of work you are seeking in the Keywords box: example: *Accountant*
 - Enter the area you are searching in the Location box: example: *New London, CT*
 - Click Search.
 - Create Your CT JobCentral Account (www.jobcentral.org/ct/jssignup.asp) - CT JobCentral allows registered job seekers to build an online résumé that can be searched by hiring employers or Connecticut Department of Labor staff assisting companies that are looking for employees.
 - View Recruitments (www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ctworks/pos-recruit.html) - Connect with employers conducting interviews in the *CTWorks* Career Centers throughout the state.
 - CT Reemployment Portal (www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/CTReP/) Find occupations with characteristics similar to previous employment along with wage information and occupation outlook.
- Career Fair Information (<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/jobfairs/default.htm>)
- Contact 2-1-1 Infoline to determine if there are other state or federal services that may be available to you. This free referral service provides information about available community services, including the Department of Social Services_ (<http://www.ct.gov/dss/site/default.asp>), basic needs assistance, and crisis intervention. Infoline is toll-free in Connecticut, operates 24 hours a day, and can be reached by dialing 2-1-1 from any phone. The service offers multilingual operators and TTY access.

¹ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/unemplt/exhaustees.htm

Navigating Unemployment

If you feel you are entitled to additional weeks of benefits, please contact your local TeleBenefits Call Center (www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/unempl/tele-benphone.htm) and ask that your UI record be reviewed. Public computers are available at any public library and at the CT Works New London Career Center.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 3. The Job Hunt

Searching for a new job can be a difficult and time consuming process. This section is designed to assist you on your job search with initial advice on how to prepare for your job hunt ([§ 3.1.](#)), career fairs ([§ 3.2.](#)), and some advice on entering into a new field with the informational interview ([§ 3.3.](#)). If you are new to the job market, this is a good place to start.

§ 3.1. Tips for the Job Hunt²

- **Get a copy of your personnel file from past employers.** If you ask for it in writing, your employer must give it to you. If you disagree with something in your file, you may write a statement to be added to your file.
- **Network!** Think of the people you know – relatives, friends, professors, classmates, co-workers at summer jobs, and others. Make more of an effort to meet with people, and use these conversations to ask their advice, to make them aware of your job search, to learn more about their jobs or their organizations, and to get the names of others who might be useful in your job search.
- **Volunteer.** If you are unemployed, volunteering your time not only adds skills and experience to your resume, it looks good to an employer! In addition, you never know who you will meet when volunteering. Most people who volunteer are concerned about and connected with their community and may be able to provide advice on new or up and coming job opportunities.
- **Target your résumé.** Make sure your résumé is targeted to the employers who receive it. Make sure your résumé is easy to read and the most important details stand out. Make more than one résumé if you are applying to more than one industry. For résumé assistance, see [§ 4.](#)
- **Use the internet.** Upload a basic copy of your résumé to each website you deem appropriate for your job search (see [§ 7.2.3.](#)). Then, search for jobs at each site and target your résumé for every job you apply for.
- **Be prepared.** You should have a copy of your résumé at all times. It is also a good idea to have fresh copies of your résumé prepared in case you are called to an interview at the last minute.
- **Create a contact database.** Use contact managers such as outlook or Google to help manage your contacts. Enter all the employers you contact, the date you sent your résumé, any contact made, people you talk to, and notes about those contacts. Create a folder in your email to keep up with where you applied and what you said. Keep a notepad with you at all times—take notes as soon as you hear about an opportunity or when you leave an interview. Get into the habit of updating your database daily.
- **Make a "to do" list every day.** This will help you organize your list of priorities and keep you focused on finding that perfect job.

² www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvce/jobhunt.htm

Navigating Unemployment

- **Try the buddy system.** Link up with a friend who is also job hunting. Arrange to speak weekly and report on accomplishments, best practices, and future plans.
- **Learn how to talk about yourself.** Throughout your job search you will speak with many people at different levels. You must be comfortable having conversations about yourself with other people. Keep in mind that you never know who may end up being useful to your job hunt.
- **Prepare an elevator speech.** You never know who you'll meet in an elevator, in line at the coffee shop, or on the street. Know what your skills are and how to communicate them. You should be able to tell prospective employers and others you meet what you can offer. You should also be able to talk about how your skills relate to the industries that interest you.
- **Find out all there is about employers in your field.** Remain current on any issues or developments in the field, read trade journals or professional publications, and read the newspaper. It is extremely impressive during an interview if you know about the latest merger or coup in the industry.
- **Attend recruitment fairs.** Visit <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ctworks/pos-recruit.html> for when employers will be conducting interviews at your local CT Works. These fairs are different from career fairs (§ 3.2.) in that they have only a single employer, so find out what you can about the employer and what jobs are being offered at the fair. Come prepared!
- **Practice for each interview.** Practice is the key to interviewing well. Friends, relatives, and career services counselors can help you formulate strong answers to questions you might not anticipate. Look at the list of possible questions in the interviewing section here (§ 6.5.) and prepare yourself.
- **Follow-up with leads immediately.** If you find out about a position late in the day, call right then. Don't wait until the next day.
- **Stay confident.** Job hunting takes time and energy. Remain confident, but prepare yourself for challenges ahead. Don't get disgruntled if you are still looking for a job and it seems like everyone you know has an offer. Most students find their jobs after graduation.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 3.2. Career Fairs³

Attending a career fair is a great way to get exposure to multiple employers and develop your network of career contacts. It is also an opportunity to find out valuable information about various industries, corporations, and different job positions. Employers participate in career fairs to meet and recruit employees. They will provide you with general information about career options, as well as specific information about current openings within their company. A list of upcoming career fairs can be found at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/jobfairs/schedule.html>.

What You Need To Do

- Review the list of employers before attending a career fair. See: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/jobfairs/schedule.html> for fairs registered or sponsored by CT Works. Otherwise, the flyer for the career fair usually states this. Figure out which ones interest you the most and go there first. It is also a good idea to determine where employers are located beforehand and in what order to visit them.
- Broaden your focus and include many types of employers. While you may not have considered working for a hospital, many hospitals recruit and hire persons in different fields such as management and information systems, food services, etc.
- Be organized! Bring plenty of copies of your résumé and a folder or portfolio to hold all your materials.
- Have a pen/pencil and paper available to take notes.
- Introduce yourself. Be prepared with a brief introductory sentence for each employer. Tell them the type of position and career path you wish to follow.
- Be aware of time demands on employers. Do not monopolize an employer's time.
- Ask specific questions about the organization and career opportunities.
- Offer to follow up after the fair.
- Ask for employers' business cards for follow up discussions and correspondence.

What To Learn From Employers

- Employment and/or hiring trends.
- Skills necessary for different careers/jobs.
- Current/future openings.
- Salary, benefits, training, and other information about the organization.
- Who to contact for follow up discussions.

What Employers May Want To Learn About You

- Specific career/job objectives.
- Individual strengths and weaknesses.
- Contributions you will make to the organization.

³ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvce/jbfair-prep.htm

Navigating Unemployment

§ 3.3. Breaking into a Field: Informational Interview

This form of interviewing is used to obtain more information about a specific job that you are interested in pursuing or thinking of pursuing. Its purpose is simply to gather information about a business and/or career. It is a way to discover if a particular career is everything you thought it would be. This interview is also a way to build a network of people that might be able to help you find the job/career you are interested in or point you in the right direction. An informational interview is a wonderful way for you to gain knowledge of a field while also providing you with the experience of interacting with employers without the pressure of asking them for a job. Your goal is to call a particular person to set up a short meeting. There are certain etiquette guidelines you should follow:

Get a list of potential people to call by asking family members, friends or calling the Human Resource department to locate who you should speak with.

When you call, introduce yourself: “Hello, my name is...”

Explain who referred you to them and why you are calling. Explain that you are looking for information and not looking for a job. Tell them you are interested in this type of work and you would like more information about the field.

Ask them if you could set up a time to meet with them for 15 to 20 minutes. Make sure you are flexible and meet according to their schedule and not yours. Ask them where it would be convenient for them to meet and at what time.

Once you have the date, time, and place of the meeting make sure to develop a list of questions you would like to have answered. Come prepared with your questions and maybe extra paper and pen/pencils. In addition, dress professionally. Each time you have an informational interview you are getting better prepared for job interviews.

Once you have completed the informational interviewing, make sure you thank the person for sharing their time and knowledge. A thank you note should be mailed within two to three days of the interview.

Some important information you should ask is: how did they get their job, what knowledge/experience/education should a person have, how are people recruited, what advice could they give you once they have reviewed your resume, etc.

The following questions are samples of those you could ask of the interviewee.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 3.3.1. Informational Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me how you acquired your job/position?
2. What are the duties, functions, or responsibilities as a _____?(fill in job title)
3. Is the job physically and/or cognitively demanding and how?
4. What are the skills that are most important in this line of work?
5. What kind of education/training/experience does one need to work in this field?
6. Are there any current issues or challenges in this field that I should be aware of?
7. Where would a person with my background and skills fit into an organization and/or company like this? (hand them your resume)
8. How are people recruited for this organization and/or company? (newspaper ads/word of mouth/networking)
9. Are there any part-time or full-time positions in this field? If so, what are the days and hours?
10. What is the entry-level job one would apply for to get into this field, what is the job title?

Navigating Unemployment

11. What are the requirements that need to be completed before someone is hired?

Background check-

Credit check-

Physical/shots needed-

12. What kind of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage someone to obtain who wants to enter this field?

13. Are there questions I should be asking that I have not?

Navigating Unemployment

§ 4. Advice on Your Résumé

The résumé is often the first contact a potential employer has with a job seeker. To be useful, it must make a good impression immediately. The current practice of corporate personnel is to give each résumé a quick glance (10-20 seconds), discard those that appear disorganized or too wordy, and file the rest. On the average, only one or two out of 100 résumés mailed will result in an interview. However, employers still ask for résumés, and a good résumé continues to provide a competitive edge in the majority of occupations. This section will help you compose a résumé that will not be ignored immediately. It will discuss how a résumé is used in today's employment climate (§ 4.1.), Help you develop and identify skills you already have (§ 4.2.), and assist you in producing a competitive résumé (§ 4.3.).

§ 4.1. What Does a Résumé Accomplish?⁴

A résumé tells the prospective employer what you have accomplished in the past and what you can do for their company now. The résumé's primary function is to sell your talents and skills to an employer; clearly, forcefully, and quickly. In a sense, you are selling yourself and your résumé is your advertisement. It serves as your advance contact to spark an employer's interest and to generate an interview.

When Is a Résumé Used?

- **Mass mailing campaigns** - Résumés frequently have been used by job seekers to contact each and every potential employer in an industry or selected area.
 - You may not know if the company has a job opening, but you want them to know that you are available and that your experience and talents can be an asset to their firm.
 - Mass mailings of this kind can be very expensive and the odds of promoting an opening are slim.
 - You can improve your chances of getting interviews by composing specific résumés for different companies.
 - Sort your targeted companies into groups with similar characteristics, and write a résumé highlighting your appropriate strengths for each group.
- **Responding to a want ad** - The most effective résumés are tailored for a particular employer. If the job requirements listed are vague or unclear, call the employer for more information.
 - Try to get a clear picture of the job duties, education, and experience requirements. It's a good idea to list your questions in advance.
 - Ask at the outset to whom you are speaking and try to find out the name and title of the individual who will review your résumé.
 - If you are speaking to someone in authority and the call is going well, try to schedule an interview.
 - Remember to thank your information giver.

⁴ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvce/resume.htm

Navigating Unemployment

- **Interviewing** - The résumé operates as a script for both you and the employer. When you compose your résumé, keep in mind that it gives you the chance to choose those topics you wish to discuss during the interview.
 - Be prepared to expand on all the accomplishments you list. A rehearsal with friends and honest critics will help.

§ 4.2. Identifying and Explaining Job Skills⁵

Everyone has skills. In fact, everyone has hundreds of skills and each one can be related in some way to one or more occupations. Without ever having had a job, without ever having been trained for a job, you are qualified to perform literally hundreds of types of jobs. Even if in today's economy you have seen your job down-sized or eliminated, you have many valuable transferable skills that will be needed in your next job.

Many people, however, are not aware of their skills and, when asked in a job interview about their skills and experience, have little or nothing to say. Some people hesitate to write a résumé because they do not know how to define their vocational and transferable skills.

How can you avoid that situation? How can you tell an employer you have the skills for a particular job when you've never done that job before? To be a successful job hunter, you must be able to tell employers, clearly and in detail, what you can do.

A systematic analysis of your skills should precede any communication with employers. Résumés, job applications, and job interviews will be more effective if you have done a thorough skills analysis first. Get to know yourself by taking a personal inventory. Skills gained from volunteer work, hobbies, education, and other life experiences should be examined in addition to those skills gained from paid work. If you have trouble identifying skills, use the guide that follows to help you get started.

List your jobs. Start by listing every job you have ever held - full-time and part-time jobs, as well as paid and unpaid jobs. List the skills you acquired in each job.

What skills did you acquire as a 12-year-old newspaper carrier? Think about it. You accepted delivery of stock items (newspapers); you planned your route and delivered papers according to the desires of your customers; you collected money, made change, kept records of cash transactions, and you probably expanded your route by getting new customers. In a limited way, you were a combination stock clerk, delivery and route driver, cashier, bookkeeper, and salesperson.

List all of your hobbies and interests. Do you sew, knit, fix your own car, operate a CB or Ham radio, refinish furniture, plant and tend a garden, build models, raise animals, play computer or video games, paint, coach sports teams, or work as a hospital volunteer? Do you like hunting and fishing, photography, diving, camping and hiking, downhill or cross-country skiing, or motorcycling? Have you ever participated in fund-raising for a group, or in church-related activities? Have you ever led a social group or sold things as part of an activity? Have you recruited members for a group?

⁵ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvce/skills.htm

Navigating Unemployment

Each of those activities can be related to one or more jobs. What does playing video games have to do with work? Well, you gain eye-hand coordination, you reason, and you make quick decisions. Those abilities can be related to a number of different jobs.

Find jobs that match your skills. After you have compiled a list of your past jobs, hobbies, and interests, and have listed several skills you acquired for each one, you should have several pages of information about yourself. Are you surprised at what you see? Take this process one step further and list as many jobs as you can in which you could use one or more of your skills.

Visit your local CT Works Career Center. (see Below, [§ 7.1.](#)) If you have trouble identifying jobs that match your skills, the staff at your local CT Works Career Center are available to help you. At this center you may use the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT), the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH), or the *Guide for Occupational Exploration*. The staff may also use the *Microcomputer Occupational Information System* (Micro-OIS) or *Occupational Analysis System* (OASYS) to help you choose your future work.

Once you have an idea of what you can do, you have to narrow it down to what you want to do. What type of work do you want to be doing in five years? What jobs will lead you to that type of work? Do these jobs pay enough to satisfy your economic needs? Will you enjoy doing these jobs and will you have a sense of accomplishment at the end of the work day? The staff at the CT Works Career Center will provide labor market projections for the jobs that interest you, as well as explain apprenticeship, certification, and licensing programs within Connecticut.

You may also register for work with the CT Works Career Center. Through a computerized job matching service, you may find the perfect job for you. If you are willing to relocate, you may search for work in any area of the United States through CT Job Central, which is available to employers nationwide.

Skills are often described as:

- **Job-Specific:** skills necessary to do a particular job such as the ability to use CNC machines, power tools, or to do federal tax returns.
- **Adaptive:** basic skills such as reading, writing, and getting to work on time; these skills are often referred to as school-to-work transition skills.
- **Transferable:** skills that can be used in many different job settings; the ability to speak before a group, to organize and schedule, to research, and to solve problems

Skills can be listed within the following broad categories:

- Artistic
- Protective
- Business
- Human
- Service
- Scientific
- Mechanical
- Sales
- Leading/Persuading
- Plant & Animal
- Industrial
- Service
- Physical/Performing

Job-Specific Skills are those skills necessary to do a specific job. For example, if you were to hire someone for a typist position, a necessary skill would be typing. You probably would qualify typing by adding a speed requirement (e.g. 50 wpm). Are there job-specific skills that both a medical doctor and a

Navigating Unemployment

veterinarian have in common? Yes, both professions require the ability to examine, diagnose and treat disease, dispense medication, perform surgery, etc. The set of skills in both occupations is similar, but the patient is different. However, it is important to remember that some jobs use the same or similar skills, but because of the client, or the environment or industry, the job requirements may be different. The following is a list of some job-specific skills:

- operating fork lift
- soldering
- filing
- customer service
- bricklaying
- designing
- hand-assembling
- marketing
- barbering
- producing video
- repairing products
- engraving
- data entry
- plastering
- preparing working drawings
- setting up drill presses
- hand-packing goods
- telemarketing
- desktop publishing
- cost accounting
- reading blueprints
- etching
- taking stenography
- siding
- instructing
- welding
- filling orders from stock
- office cleaning
- editing copy
- analyzing budgets

Adaptive Skills may be referred to as school-to-work transition skills or basic skills necessary for acquiring and keeping a job. As we enter the 21st century, the workplace will be more dependent on technology. Not only must people in the workforce know how to read, write, and do math, they must also be able to use computers. The SCANS Report for America 2000 lists the competencies effective workers have as:

"... productively use resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology. Competence requires a foundation of basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening); thinking skills (thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning); and personal qualities (individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity)."

The following list is an example of the kinds of skills termed adaptive:

- Getting along with fellow employees
- Professional telephone technique
- Listening to and following directions
- Dependability
- Obeying safety regulations
- Ability to work independently

Transferable Skills are skills that are useful in many job situations. Employers often ask for good communication skills. This includes the adaptive skills of reading and writing, as well as the transferable skills of public speaking, training, writing reports, etc. The following is a list of several transferable skills:

Navigating Unemployment

- Synthesize data and concepts
- Analyze
- Make decisions
- Identify problems and provide solutions
- Delegate
- Persuade and lead
- Plan and organize projects and/or people
- Assess performance
- Train others
- Observe and evaluate things and/or people

The following identifies job-specific and transferable skills for the previously-identified broad skills categories:

- **Artistic Skills** - work in the entertainment, museum, or publishing industry
 - **Examples:** writing fiction, fact, poetry; or editing, painting, sketching, creating computer graphics, drawing, singing, dancing, choreographing, entertaining, playing musical instrument(s), improvising, composing, acting, directing (theater, movie, television, or radio programs)
- **Scientific Skills** - work with chemicals, rocks, metals, mathematics, movement of the earth and stars, living organisms such as plants and animals; work in medical and research organizations.
 - **Examples:** testing, measuring, analyzing, recording data, identifying problems, collecting samples, using lab equipment
- **Plant & Animal Skills** - work in farming, fishing, forestry, or horticultural businesses
 - **Examples:** transplanting seedlings, harvesting crops, operating farm equipment, using hand tools, applying pesticide & fertilizer, planning and scheduling, cultivating, mowing, irrigating.
- **Protective Skills** - work in law enforcement, fire-fighting, guarding or protecting animals, property, or people
 - **Examples:** guarding, reporting, patrolling, inspecting, investigating, searching, monitoring alarms, using equipment (e.g., X-ray, metal detector, or surveillance), traffic controlling, protecting, medical assisting, policing.
- **Mechanical Skills** - work by applying mechanical principles to practical situations using machines, hand tools, or equipment; printing, custom sewing, fabrication and repair of musical instruments, scientific/medical/technical equipment, project planning and design, construction, mining.
 - **Examples:** operating earth-moving equipment, following engineering specifications, reading blueprints/schematics, drafting, repairing marine craft, installing, surveying land, woodworking, installing/repairing air conditioning, repairing automobiles.
- **Industrial Skills** - work in a manufacturing setting to produce goods
 - **Examples:** setting up and operating machines, inspecting, managing inventory, weighing/measuring/sorting objects.
- **Business Skills** - work in an office setting

Navigating Unemployment

- **Examples:** being accurate, paying attention to details, keeping financial records, collecting data, analyzing, interpreting government regulations, using computers, resolving problems.
- **Sales Skills** - work in retail, wholesale, or outside sales
 - **Examples:** keeping accurate records, handling money, quoting prices, working with customers, marketing, handling promotions/trade shows.
- **Service Skills** - work within the service industry; this may be in the field of hospitality, personal service, recreational service, food service, customer service
 - **Examples:** servicing customers, using computers, communicating.
- **Human Service Skills** - work with people to provide mental, spiritual, social, physical, or vocational services; often requires certification or licensing and education beyond high school.
 - **Examples:** counseling, rehabilitating, nursing, providing therapy, performing patient care.
- **Leading/Persuading Skills** - work in the fields of mathematics and statistics, data processing design, data analysis, educational and library services, sociology and psychology research, law, economics; higher education is often required
 - **Examples:** leading, influencing, using computer technology, analyzing text, instructing.
- **Physical/Performing Skills** - work in athletics or other performing arts before an audience
 - **Examples:** coaching, instructing, umpiring, refereeing, judging, acting, singing, juggling, dancing.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 4.3. Building Your Résumé⁶

Be prepared to spend some time and effort in writing an effective résumé. You will need two types of information:

- **About Yourself** - You need a clear picture of your job talents, work history, education, and career goals. It may be helpful to refer to the United States Employment Service's *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT) which contains generalized job descriptions of all the jobs you held or, those you wish to pursue in the future.⁷
- **About the Job** - Gather as much specific information as possible about the position for which you are applying. Your résumé should show that your skills, education, achievements, work experience, and past job achievements are related to the position requirements. The DOT may prove helpful here as well.

Making Yourself More Marketable: Transferable Skills

People who are actively seeking a new job or a better career, or who have held or are seeking middle-management positions, face increased competition. To help prepare for this increased challenge, it is important to emphasize transferable skills. When you are thinking about your past work history (especially your most recent positions), think about skills you developed and responsibilities you had that could be appropriate to the performance of other jobs in different industries. For example, if you are in a sales or marketing position within the insurance industry, think about how you could apply those skills to the health care industry. The same is true for your accounting, computer, management, communication, and analytical skills.

To get a better idea of transferable skills, it might be helpful to look in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*.⁸ Both publications contain job descriptions which include lists of skills. By emphasizing transferable skills, you will expand your potential job market.

§ 4.3.1. Types of Résumés

All of the résumés described in books and computer programs are based on variations and combinations of two formats: *reverse-chronological* and *functional*. The key to writing an effective résumé is choosing the right style for you: one that emphasizes your strengths and de-emphasizes your weaknesses. Whichever résumé style you choose, be sure to include examples of results that you produced that benefited your previous employer(s). Employers want to see measurable achievements. They want to know they are going to hire someone who can contribute to their organization's bottom line.

⁶ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvrce/resume.htm

⁷ located at any *CTWorks* Career Center

⁸ located at *CTWorks* Career Center

Navigating Unemployment

The Reverse-Chronological Résumé

This format lists the jobs you've had by dates of employment, starting with your most recent job. The usual arrangement is:

- Dates of employment.
- Job title.
- Name and address of company.
- A brief description of the duties performed.
- Skills used.
- Major ways you have benefited the company.

Make sure you include all transferable skills. This format stresses what you accomplished in each of the positions you held.

Use this format if:

- You have progressed up a clearly-defined career ladder and are looking for career advancement.
- You have recent experience in the field you are seeking.
- You have a continuous work history in your field.

Do not use this format if:

- You have had many different types of jobs.
- You have changed jobs frequently.
- You are trying to switch fields.
- You are just starting out.

Tips for preparing a Reverse-Chronological Résumé:

- List your most recent jobs first.
- Give dates for each job.
- Briefly describe the main duties you performed and your accomplishments in each job.
- Emphasize duties performed and past accomplishments that are relevant to the job you currently seek.

The Functional Résumé

This format emphasizes your skills and accomplishments as they relate to the job for which you're applying. As in other résumé formats, you should include all transferable skills. A functional résumé presents a profile of your experience based on professional strengths or skill groupings. Your employment history usually follows, but in less detail than in a chronological résumé.

Navigating Unemployment

Use this format if:

- You have worked for only one employer, but have performed a wide variety of jobs.
- You are applying for a job that is different from your present or most recent job.
- You have little or no job experience: if you have recently graduated from school, for example.
- You have gaps in your work history.
- You are re-entering the job market after several years of freelancing, consulting, homemaking, or unemployment.

Do not use this format if:

- Your work history is stable and continuous: employers sometimes assume that a functional résumé hides a spotty, unstable work history

Whichever résumé format you use, keep in mind that the more unusual the appearance, the more likely it is to distract the employer from your accomplishments.

Tips for preparing a Functional Résumé:

- Study the duties for the job you are seeking.
- Identify a few general skills that are important to the job.
- Review your background and experience.
- Identify talents and accomplishments that demonstrate your ability to perform the job skills.
- List these talents and accomplishments under the job skills to which they are related.
- Emphasize activities that demonstrate qualities such as leadership and/or organizational skills, at work or in organizations such as clubs or fraternities.

§ 4.3.2. General Guide to an Effective Résumé

The following suggestions apply to any type of résumé. The order below is recommended, but you can be flexible:

Format:

- **Heading:** Your name, address, and phone number should be prominently displayed at the top of the page.
- **Summary or Objective:** If you use a summary, highlight your experience and accomplishments in two or three sentences.
 - Clearly communicate the type of job you want and what you can offer to an employer.
 - If you prefer to state an objective, make it broad enough to embrace closely related jobs, but not so broad that you appear lacking in focus or willing to take anything (this should be done in one sentence).
 - Whether you choose a summary or an objective, indicate a level, function, and industry for the position you are seeking.

Navigating Unemployment

- Be concise but general.
- Use your cover letter to make your summary or objective specific to a particular employer.
- **Experience:** Indicate your major responsibilities.
 - Emphasize accomplishments and their measurable benefits to your former employer, e.g. situations improved, savings/earnings, and new concepts adopted by firm.
 - Achievements should be consistent with career direction, with a concentration on recent successes.
- **Skills:** List special skills such as word processing or an ability to operate special equipment.
- **Work History:** List work history pertinent to the position being sought in brief, concise bullets. List job dates, position names, company, and address/location.
- **Education:** Start with the most advanced degree and give the name and location of the institution, major and minor fields, and all career-oriented scholarships and academic awards.
 - Include career-related extra-curricular activities, workshops, and seminars.
 - Licenses, Certifications, & Publications—Include only those that are career-related, without elaboration.
- **Additional Personal Data:** Include only if career-related, such as memberships in associations.

Content

Do:

- Be positive.
- Identify your relevant accomplishments; they should be quantitatively stated (i.e. use numbers) where appropriate and describe how they benefited the employer.
- Have friends who know your professional accomplishments comment on your résumé and suggest items you may have forgotten or perhaps dismissed as unimportant.
- Be specific; choose words carefully, make every word count, and eliminate unnecessary words.
- Use concise sentences.
- Use bullet entries for a clean, easy-to-read look.
- Use action verbs.

Don't:

- Don't devote space to items not directly related to the job you are seeking, such as hobbies, personal data (height, weight, and marital status), or descriptions of jobs from your previous career.
- Don't use more than a few lines to describe your accomplishments; a one- or two-page résumé is best.
- Don't explain employment gaps.
- Don't include references.
 - A separate list of references should be prepared ahead of time and should be available for distribution to employers on request, especially at the interview.
 - Individuals and firms listed as a reference should be informed that a contact may be made on your behalf.
- Don't include salary requirements.

Navigating Unemployment

Appearance

Do:

- Type your résumé or have it professionally printed (if you use a computer printer, make sure the print is letter quality).
- Use 8 1/2" x 11" quality paper.
- Use wide margins, single space within sections, double space between sections.
- Center or left-justify and capitalize all headings.
- Make sure your résumé is neat, readable, symmetrical, and visually balanced.
- Proofread your résumé carefully and then have someone else proofread it (be sure your spelling, grammar, and punctuation are flawless).

Don't:

- Use abbreviations, except for names of states (e.g. CT, MA, NY)

Where to Get Additional Help

- **Books** - There are as many variations in résumé styles and formats as there are books on the market. Most books describe these variations in great detail and provide numerous examples. Some are specific to particular industries or to specific groups of job seekers.
 - Check your local library, bookstore, or the resource center at the CT Works Career Center for these books.
- **Computer programs** - There are several software programs that can inventory personal attributes and job history, and can format a résumé in the style of your choice.
 - Check software listings at bookstores and computer stores.
- **Workshops** - Many workshops run by public and non-profit agencies, including CT Works Career Center will help you write a résumé; so will private, fee-charging firms.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 4.4. Sample Résumés

§ 4.4.1 Reverse-Chronological Résumé

Joe Blow

100 Awesome St.
Georgetown, CT 06829
(203) 888-8888

joe.bloe.madeup@zilch.com

Position Sought:

- Custodian, Full time on call

Summary of Qualifications:

- Leadership
- Organization
- Mechanical ability
- Attention to detail
- lifting 50+ lbs.
- Spanish fluency

Work Experience:

12/09 – 06/10 (Seasonal)

City Park Worker, *City of New York Parks & Recreation*, New York, NY

- Responsible for opening and maintaining, conducting public safety measures, and assisting in event set up in parks.
- Worked to create a clean, safe, and open atmosphere in the various parks within and around New York City
- Helped to set up for and coordinate in park events, including events with VIP attendance such as Gov. Patterson and Sen. Cuomo, and Mayor Bloomberg.

02/09 – 12/09

On-Site Custodian Supervisor, *Ultimate Services Incorporated*, New York, NY

- Supervised a maintenance staff of five in floor buffing and general maintenance of client properties such as shopping centers and office buildings.
- Maintained and educated others in maintenance of cleaning equipment valued at over \$10,000

04/08 – 03/09

Inventory Clerk, *Canal Luggage & Merchandise*, New York, NY

- Managed a warehouse
- Performed bookkeeping procedures to optimize efficiency in warehouse.

Education:

Technical Career Institutes New York, 09/09 – 06/10

General Equivalent Diploma, 04/09

Navigating Unemployment

§ 4.4.2. Functional Résumé

Joe Blow

100 Awesome St.
Georgetown, CT 06829
(203) 888-8888

joe.bloe.madeup@zilch.com

Position Sought: Custodian, Full time on call

Experience:

- Leadership
 - Supervised a maintenance staff of five
 - Delegated maintenance workload
- Equipment maintenance
 - Maintained cleaning equipment valued at over \$10,000.
 - Learned to maintain and operate new equipment
- Event set up
 - Set up for events with VIP attendance, including Gov. Patterson, Sen. Cuomo, and Mayor Bloomberg
 - Set up catering for various functions
- Manual Labor
 - Daily upkeep of Parks and Recreation Center in New Your city
 - Cleaned facilities, including floor stripping, buffing, and maintenance
 - Snow removal in parks and business setting
 - Lifted heavy packages and luggage (exceeding 50 lbs.)

Summary of Qualifications:

- Leadership
- Organization
- Mechanical ability
- Attention to detail
- lifting 50+ lbs
- Spanish fluency

Work History:

- December 09 – June 10 (Seasonal) *City Park Worker*
City of New York Parks & Recreation, New York, NY
- February 09 - December 09 *On-Site Custodian Supervisor*
Ultimate Services Incorporated, New York, NY
- April 08 – March 09 *Inventory Clerk*
Canal Luggage & Merchandise, New York, NY

Education:

- September 09 – June 10 Technical Career Institutes New York
- April 2009 - General Equivalent Diploma

Navigating Unemployment

§ 5. Letters⁹

Forwarding a résumé is only part of the written communication you may have with a potential employer. In addition to a résumé, you might write many different types of letters as well: requests for an informational interview (§ 5.1), thank you letters (§ 5.5), cover letters (§ 5.2-4), and acceptance and decline letters (§ 5.6), all of which are discussed here. Email is discussed in § 5.7. These letters are all part of how you market yourself to an employer or potential colleague. So, make sure that you take as much care to write a quality letter as you do when writing a quality résumé.

The objective of any type of letter you write, with the exception of the informational interview request letter, is to show your value to the employer. Before beginning to write a letter, you should first take a closer look at the requirements and needs of the employer. Then you should plan out the letter by putting the most important items first, supporting them with facts and examples. Show how your education, experience, and background can be of value to the employer. This will help you demonstrate that you are a good match for the position and that the employer should interview you.

Key Points when Writing Each Letter

- **Show Interest.** Do research on the employer and then personalize the letter. Knowing something about the employer shows a serious interest in the company. This works much better than sending out dozens of identical form letters.
- **Emphasize one or two of your most significant accomplishments.** This draws attention to your most noteworthy skills and demonstrates that you are an above average candidate.
- **Be brief.** This shows that you value the employer's time.
- **Be persuasive.** Don't just describe your background. State your objectives concisely and make the employer want to take a closer look at you.
- **Be positive.** Write the letter clearly and with a positive attitude. Do not add information that may call attention to your weaknesses or inability to do the job.
- **Use strong action words.** Use the active voice which will convey a sense of energy and grab the employer's attention.
- **Be organized.** Group similar items together and arrange the paragraphs logically so that they flow from one thought to another. Don't just lump unrelated information together.
- **Avoid jargon or clichés.** Although it is tempting to use phrases like "proven leadership skills" or "proven track record", these buzzwords might suggest that you're parroting a phrase instead of using an original thought.

§ 5.1. Informational Interview Request Letters

Going on "informational" interviews can be an excellent way of finding out more about a particular company, to locate potential job leads, and to learn more about various career fields. *When writing this type of letter, make it clear that your purpose is to gather information — not to get a job.* Introduce yourself and state your purpose. Indicate that you will follow up with a phone call to the employer to arrange a meeting time or a telephone interview — whichever is convenient for the employer. *Do not*

⁹ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvce/cover-greatltr.htm

Navigating Unemployment

enclose a résumé — your purpose is not to ask for a job. If the lead was provided to you by another individual, make reference to this individual in the letter.

When requesting an informational interview:

- Introduce yourself and your purpose for writing.
- Briefly describe your background and why you are interested in the employer's industry or organization.
- Let the employer know how they can help you.
- Let the employer know when you will be following up by telephone.
- Be brief and professional.

§ 5.2. Cover Letters

Never send a résumé without a cover letter unless the employer specifically requests that you don't send one. The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce your resume and to emphasize the skills and experience you have that are most relevant to the position you are seeking. A cover letter is most effective when written for a specific employer and a specific job opening. Researching the employer allows you to personalize the letter and make connections between the job opening and your qualifications.

Questions your cover letter should answer:

- Why are you writing?
- Why are you interested in the job and/or the company?
- Why should the employer be interested in you?
- What is your next step?

The above questions should be answered in these sections:

- **Introduction**
Introduce yourself and state the purpose of the letter. Indicate which position you are interested in, how you heard about the opening, and (if appropriate) who referred you. Briefly explain why you are the best qualified candidate for the position.
- **Body**
Make the connection between your experience and background and the requirements of the job. This should be accomplished in one or two concise paragraphs. Summarize your experience and give examples. Do not repeat what is on your résumé — expand on what is written on your résumé and indicate how it relates to the job and to the employer. Identify any transferable skills, accomplishments, or results.
- **Closing**
Use a brief closing. Summarize what you have written and indicate that you have enclosed your résumé. Choose an ending that indicates a next step — use an active statement such as an offer to contact the employer within a specific period of time (usually within 1-2 weeks). Confirm your contact information and sign the letter.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 5.3. Cover Letter Checklist¹⁰

Writing Style

- Limit the average sentence to 10-20 words. If the sentence is longer, either shorten it or split it into two sentences.
- Keep every paragraph under five lines.
- Wherever possible, begin each sentence with powerful action words.

The Basics

- Address the letter whenever possible to a particular person (preferably a person who does the hiring). Make sure you have spelled the person's name correctly and that you have the individual's exact job title.
- Personalize the letter for the reader to show that you have researched the company.
- Put your strengths and skills into your own words. Use sample letters to guide you, but don't copy them exactly.
- Show energy and enthusiasm.
- Show the employer what you can offer the company while supporting and amplifying your résumé.
- Give concrete examples of your abilities and skills.
- Use concise, positive, and direct language. Don't be flowery or overly formal.
- Balance between friendliness and professionalism.
- Rely on information that is relevant to the job you are seeking.
- Clearly ask for the next step in the process (such as permission to contact the employer by phone).

Contact Information

- Contact information (your name, address, zip code, and personal telephone number) should be on every page.
- Do not include your business number unless absolutely necessary.
- If the letter is more than one page long, number each page and bind it together with either a staple or a paper clip.

Objectives

- Do you state why you are writing (to apply for a job, to set up an informational interview, etc.)?
- Do you tie the letter specifically to the job and/or the company?
- Do you address relevant points such as your skills that are specific to the job or items discussed at the interview?
- Is your most relevant experience prioritized in the letter in a way that strengthens it?
- Have you omitted references to why you left your last job? (use the letter to sell, not to justify)
- Have you omitted all references to salary (unless requested)?
- If you've indicated your education, is it relevant to the job?
- Have you omitted irrelevant job duties?

¹⁰ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvrce/cover-checklist.htm

Navigating Unemployment

- Have you mentioned contributions and achievements, as well as problems you have personally solved during your career?
- Have you guarded against being vague by eliminating all irrelevant information?
- Is the letter long enough (and short enough) to attract the reader's interest?
- Have you indicated that references are available and omitted long lists of names and addresses?

§ 5.4. Common Cover Letter Mistakes¹¹

Forgetting to enclose your résumé: This may be obvious, but it's very important. Make sure you enclose any materials you mention in your cover letter such as a résumé, transcript, writing sample, etc.

Typographical errors: Edit your work very carefully. Use the "spell check" function on your word processing software in addition to checking your work. Nothing turns off an employer more than sloppy cover letters or materials. The most common typographical errors are:

- Misspelling of the employer's name or title in the address, greeting, or on the envelope.
- Forgetting to change the name of the company each time it appears in the application or body of the letter.
- Applying for one position and mentioning another position in the body of the letter.

Inaccurate information about the company: Make sure to verify any information about the company you intend to use in the letter. Be specific when you tie the information to your skills. Do not attempt to mislead the employer by stating that you are familiar with the company when you don't have specific information to back it up.

Inappropriate tone: Always use a positive manner. Make sure the letter strengthens your candidacy. It might help if you had someone else read the letter as well.

Unrelated Career Goals: Personalize each letter for the employer. Show a genuine interest in the position. Remember that the employer is interested in what you can do for the company. Every part of the letter should support the purpose for which you are writing. If you are applying for a position as a sales representative, include only the experience you have that pertains to that position.

Emphasizing a lack of experience: Do not call attention to your shortcomings in a letter. You should only emphasize your strengths. Focus on your skills, experience, and ability.

Misrepresentation: Never, ever misrepresent your experience or skills in either your cover letter or résumé. If it is discovered, it is grounds for immediate dismissal. If you have achieved something, say so, but do not exaggerate to the point of misrepresenting the facts.

Anecdotes: Your cover letter should be written with a serious, professional tone. Using anecdotes causes you to run the risk of not being taken seriously. Keep it polite and respectful.

Sounding desperate: Your cover letter should make you sound determined, not desperate. Don't "beg" for the position.

¹¹ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsrvce/cover-mistakes.htm

Navigating Unemployment

Demanding statements: Never demand something of the employer in a cover letter. A common mistake is to say "I'm looking for a position that will adequately challenge me." The employer will have the impression that you expect to be put into a position that meets your needs, not the employer's.

Wrong pronouns: Use the active voice. Speaking in the third person in a letter is disconcerting to an employer.

Gimmicks: Most employers prefer a simple, well written letter to a gimmicky product.

Messy corrections: Make sure you include all pertinent information. If you forget to include something, type the letter over. Don't add a supplementary note. It will make you appear lazy and unprofessional.

Form Letters: Mass mailings are not always the best way to find a job. They also don't allow you to personalize each letter and résumé. Tailor each letter you send to the position and demonstrate your interest in and familiarity with the employer.

Personal Photos: Photos are completely unprofessional unless you want to enter modeling, acting, or broadcast journalism.

Personal Information: Do not include data such as age, gender, marital status, race, religion, or any other personal information unless you feel it directly pertains to the position you are seeking.

Inappropriate stationery: The only universally accepted stationery colors are white and ivory. Using different colors is not always the best way to get an employer's attention.

Forgetting to sign your letter: Don't forget to sign your name at the end of the letter. This personalizes it for the employer. Sign in blue or black ink. Do not use a script font on your PC to sign your name.

§ 5.5. Thank You Letters

Send a thank you letter after every job or informational interview within 24 hours. This is your chance to express your appreciation for the time that the employer spent with you and to reassert your interest in the position or organization. If necessary, you can also clarify some of the points you made at the interview. Send a thank you letter to anyone who has helped you along the way.

Tips on writing thank you letters:

- If you were interviewed by more than one person, send a thank you letter to each person in the interview process and personalize each letter. They are likely to discuss your candidacy together.
- When writing to the person who coordinated the interview, mention the name of every person you met.
- Use plain, light colored stationery.
- Mention the date you spoke with the person and highlight a useful piece of information you received or offered.
- Keep the letter brief, usually limiting it to three short paragraphs.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 5.6. Acceptance and Decline Letters

In any job search, you will eventually have to accept or decline a job offer. First respond by telephone, and then follow up with a letter. Confirm your decision in writing to avoid confusion later on.

When writing an acceptance letter, be sure to include the details of the position, including salary, bonuses and relocation package (if appropriate), job title, start date, and location. Also include a short message of enthusiasm for the position and thank the employer for giving you this opportunity.

If you are declining an offer, be sure to include a statement of appreciation for the offer, and your reasons for declining it. Including a statement that leaves the "door open" for some future contact is always a good idea as well.

§ 5.7. Email Letters

The interview request letter, acceptance, and decline letters can often be submitted on line. Much of what is stated about each respective letter applies to electronic versions. **Be Professional!** All correspondence must have the same professional demeanor as if you were sending a paper letter.

Often an employer will request applications via email. This allows you to assure delivery and them to save time. Be sure to incorporate the following guidelines:

- Attach your cover letter as a PDF or RTF version (or both) to assure the letter can be opened.
- Include both yours and your recipients contact information at the beginning of the letter.
- Use the email to briefly present yourself and what you have attached. Highlight what is presented in your Cover Letter, but do not repeat. The email should mirror your cover letter without too much detail.
- Explain how to get in contact with you and reiterate your desire for an interview.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 6. The Interview

The interview is one of the most intimidating parts of any job search. This need not be the case for you, however. This section will discuss the different types of interviews (§ 6.1.), the typical interview structure (§ 6.2.), and help you prepare for your interview by going over some interview strategies (§ 6.3.), provide you with additional advice to go over on your own, (§ 6.4.), and offer commonly asked questions in interviews (§ 6.5.). It is suggested that you role play with others or go over on your own how you would answer these questions.

§ 6.1. Types of Interviews¹²

There are several different types of interviews which you may encounter. You probably won't know in advance which type you will be facing. Below are some descriptions of the different types of interviews and what you can expect in each of them.

- **Screening Interview:** A preliminary interview either in person or by phone, in which a company representative determines whether you have the basic qualifications to warrant a subsequent interview.
- **Structured Interview:** In a structured interview, the interviewer explores certain predetermined areas using questions which have been written in advance. The interviewer has a written description of the experience, skills, and personality traits of an ideal candidate. Your experience and skills are compared to specific job tasks. This type of interview is very common and most traditional interviews are based on this format.
- **Unstructured Interview:** Although the interviewer is given a written description of the ideal candidate, in the unstructured interview, the interviewer is not given instructions on what specific areas to cover.
- **Multiple Interviews:** Multiple interviews are commonly used with professional jobs. This approach involves a series of interviews in which you meet individually with various representatives of the organization. In the initial interview, the representative usually attempts to get basic information on your skills and abilities. In subsequent interviews, the focus is on how you would perform the job in relation to the company's goals and objectives. After the interviews are completed, the interviewers meet and pool their information about your qualifications for the job. A variation on this approach involves a series of interviews in which unsuitable candidates are screened out at each succeeding level.
- **Stress Interview:** The interviewer intentionally attempts to upset you to see how you react under pressure. You may be asked questions that make you uncomfortable or you may be interrupted while you are speaking. Although it is uncommon for an entire interview to be conducted under stress conditions, it is common for the interviewer to incorporate stress questions as a part of a traditional interview.
- **Targeted Interview:** Although similar to the structured interview, the areas covered are much more limited. Key qualifications for success on the job are identified and relevant questions are prepared in advance.

¹² www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsrvce/intervie.htm

Navigating Unemployment

- **Situational Interview:** Situations are set up which simulate common problems you may encounter on the job. Your responses to these situations are measured against pre-determined standards. This approach is often used as one part of a traditional interview rather than as an entire interview format.
- **Group Interview:** You may be interviewed by two or more company representatives simultaneously. Sometimes, one of the interviewers is designated to ask stress questions to see how you respond under pressure. A variation on this format is for two or more company representatives to interview a group of candidates at the same time.

§ 6.2. The Interview Structure¹³

You may have several interviews with a company before receiving a job offer. The first interview is a screening interview conducted either over the phone or at the employer's office. All employers conduct these interviews, and, depending on which industry you are entering, this may be your only interview. This type of interview is usually brief, lasting anywhere from 30-60 minutes. The employer might take this time to have you expand on the information on your résumé, or the employer might take this time to describe the company and the position. If the employer is impressed with you, you will either be offered the job shortly after the interview or asked to come in again for a second interview, depending on the industry and type of job.

The second interview is longer, and can last anywhere from two hours to a whole day. It can include questions, (sometimes) testing, a tour, and possibly interviews with other employees. At the end of this interview, you should have a thorough understanding of the company and the job opening, and have enough information to determine whether you should accept the position (if it is offered).

Effective Communication

Effective communication is essential to the interview process. The better that you can communicate your skills, knowledge and experience to the employer, the higher the probability is that you will be offered the job. Here are some communication tips:

- **Be yourself.** Allow your personality to come through. Be professional and enthusiastic about your skills and experience.
- **Listen carefully.** This is important for learning something about the job and to be able to answer any questions.
- **Be positive.** Employers don't want to hear about bad experiences.
 - If the employer asks you about a weakness in your background, try to focus on what you've learned from the experience.
- **Be poised.** Nonverbal behavior is very important. Smile when you greet the employer, maintain eye contact, don't slouch and keep both feet on the floor when seated, and try to control nervous behavior.
- **Don't worry about short pauses.** Every moment of the interview does not have to be filled with conversation. The employer may need a minute to formulate a question, and you may need a minute to formulate an answer.

¹³ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvrce/interviews-structure.htm

Navigating Unemployment

An interview usually follows a pattern of warm-up, information exchange, and wrap-up.

Warm Up

The warm-up is the first few minutes of the interview. During this phase, the employer will formulate a first (and lasting) impression of you. The employer will formulate this impression by the way you make your greeting, your handshake, and the way you are dressed. The employer may start out by asking about the weather, your travel to the interview, or some other neutral subject; on the other hand, the employer might start out with "Tell me about yourself." This is your opening to briefly talk about your skills, background, and interest in the position.

Information Exchange

This is the major part of the interview. This is when you will be asked the most questions, and when you will learn the most about the employer. During a screening interview an employer might spend more time describing the company and the position than on asking you questions; in a second interview, however, the employer will spend more time asking you questions. The questions may range from "Why are you interested in this position?" to "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" to "What are your long range career goals?" If you have prepared for the interview, you will be able to respond by emphasizing your qualifications for the position. The more you practice, the more polished you will become.

Wrap Up

The employer will generally move to the wrap-up stage of the interview by asking "Do you have any questions?" Always ask questions to demonstrate your interest in the job and your research about the company. Examples are:

- Questions to clarify information
- Questions regarding the use of new technology
- Questions related to practices in the career field
- Questions to assess the direction of the company (such as, "Where is the company headed in the next five years?" or "Why do you like working for ...?")

Do not ask direct questions about salary or benefits unless the employer does so first. The employer might ask if you have anything else to add. It's always best to have a response. Take the opportunity to thank the employer, summarize your qualifications, and re-emphasize your interest in the position. This is a good time to add more information or emphasize a point you made earlier. The last impression is very important and will add substance to the information exchange part of the interview.

§ 6.3. Interviewing Strategies¹⁴

The interview strategies discussed below can be used effectively in any type of interview you may encounter.

¹⁴ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvrce/intervie.htm

Navigating Unemployment

§ 6.3.1. Before the Interview

Prepare in advance. The better prepared you are, the less anxious you will be and the greater your chances for success.

- Role play. Find someone to role play the interview with you. This person should be someone with whom you feel comfortable and with whom you can discuss your weaknesses freely. The person should be objective and knowledgeable, perhaps a business associate.
- Assess your interviewing skills. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Work on correcting your weaknesses, such as speaking rapidly, talking too loudly or softly and nervous habits such as shaking hands or inappropriate facial expressions.
- Learn the questions that are commonly asked and prepare answers to them. Practice giving answers which are brief but thorough.
- Decide what questions you would like to ask and practice politely interjecting them at different points in the interview.
- Evaluate your strengths, skills, abilities, and education as they relate to the type of job you are seeking.
- Practice tailoring your answers to show how you meet the company's needs, if you have details about the specific job before the interview.
- Assess your over-all appearance. Find out what clothing is appropriate for your industry. Although some industries such as fashion and advertising are more stylish, acceptable attire for most industries is conservative.
- Have several sets of appropriate clothing available since you may have several interviews over a few days.
- Your clothes should be clean and pressed, and your shoes polished.
- Make sure your hair is neat, your nails clean, and you are generally well groomed.
- Research the company. The more you know about the company and the job you are applying for, the better you will do in the interview. Get as much information as you can before the interview.
- Have extra copies of your résumé available to take on the interview. The interviewer may ask you for extra copies.
- Make sure you bring along the same version of your résumé that you originally sent the company. You can also refer to your résumé to complete applications that ask for job history information (e.g., dates of employment, names of former employers and their telephone numbers, job responsibilities, and accomplishments).
- Arrive early at the interview. Plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. Give yourself time to find a rest room so you can check your appearance.

It's important to make a good impression from the moment you enter the reception area. Greet the receptionist cordially and try to appear confident. You never know what influence the receptionist has with your interviewer. With a little small talk, you may get some helpful information about the interviewer and the job opening. If you are asked to fill out an application while you're waiting, be sure to fill it out completely.

Navigating Unemployment

§ 6.3.2. During the Interview

The job interview is usually a two way discussion between you and a prospective employer. The interviewer is attempting to determine whether you have what the company needs, and you are attempting to determine if you would accept the job if offered. Both of you will be trying to get as much information as possible in order to make those decisions.

The interview that you are most likely to face is a structured interview with a traditional format. It usually consists of three phases. The introductory phase covers the greeting, small talk, and an overview of which areas will be discussed during the interview. The middle phase is a question and answer period. The interviewer asks most of the questions, but you are given an opportunity to ask questions as well. The closing phase gives you an opportunity to ask any final questions you might have, cover any important points that haven't been discussed, and get information about the next step in the process.

Introductory Phase

This phase is very important. You want to make a good first impression and, if possible, get additional information you need about the job and the company.

- **Make a good impression.** You only have a few seconds to create a positive first impression which can influence the rest of the interview and even determine whether you get the job. The interviewer's first impression of you is based mainly on non-verbal clues; the interviewer is assessing your over-all appearance and demeanor.
 - When greeting the interviewer, be certain your handshake is firm and that you make eye contact.
 - Wait for the interviewer to signal you before you sit down.
 - Find a comfortable position so that you don't appear tense.
 - Lean forward slightly and maintain eye contact with the interviewer. This posture shows that you are interested in what is being said.
 - Smile naturally at appropriate times.
 - Show that you are open and receptive by keeping your arms and legs uncrossed.
 - Avoid keeping your briefcase or your handbag on your lap.
 - Pace your movements so that they are not too fast or too slow.
 - Try to appear relaxed and confident.
- **Get the information you need.** If you weren't able to get complete information about the job and the company in advance, you should try to get it as early as possible in the interview. Be sure to prepare your questions in advance. Knowing the following things will allow you to present those strengths and abilities that the employer wants:
 - Why does the company need someone in this position?
 - Exactly what would they expect of you?
 - Are they looking for traditional or innovative solutions to problems?
- **When to ask questions.** The problem with a traditional interview structure is that your chance to ask questions occurs late in the interview. Deciding exactly when to ask your questions is the tricky part; timing is everything. You may have to make a decision based on intuition and your first impressions of the interviewer.

Navigating Unemployment

- Does the interviewer seem comfortable or nervous, soft spoken or forceful, formal or casual? These signals will help you to judge the best time to ask your questions.
- The sooner you ask the questions, the less likely you are to disrupt the interviewer's agenda. However, if you ask questions too early, the interviewer may feel you are trying to control the interview.
- Try asking questions right after the greeting and small talk.
- Since most interviewers like to set the tone of the interview and maintain initial control, always phrase your questions in a way that leaves control with the interviewer.
- You may want to wait until the interviewer has given an overview of what will be discussed. This overview may answer some of your questions or may provide some details that you can use to ask additional questions. Once the middle phase of the interview has begun, you may find it more difficult to ask questions.

Middle Phase

During this phase of the interview, you will be asked many questions about your work experience, skills, education, activities, and interests. You are being assessed on how you will perform the job in relation to the company objectives.

All your responses should be concise. Use specific examples to illustrate your point whenever possible. Although your responses should be prepared in advance so that they are well phrased and effective, be sure they do not sound rehearsed. Remember that your responses must always be adapted to the present interview. Incorporate any information you obtained earlier in the interview with the responses you had prepared in advance and then answer in a way that is appropriate to the question.

Below are frequently asked questions and some suggested responses:

- **"Tell me about yourself."** Briefly describe your experience and background. If you are unsure what information the interviewer is seeking, say, "Are there any areas in particular you'd like to know about?"
- **"What is your weakest point?"** (A stress question) Mention something that is actually a strength. Some examples are:
 - "I'm something of a perfectionist."
 - "I'm a stickler for punctuality."
 - "I'm tenacious."
 - Give a specific situation from your previous job to illustrate your point.
- **"What is your strongest point?"**
 - "I work well under pressure."
 - "I am organized and manage my time well."
 - If you have just graduated from college you might say, "I am eager to learn, and I don't have to unlearn old techniques."
 - Give a specific example to illustrate your point.
- **"What do you hope to be doing five years from now?"**
 - "I hope I will still be working here and have increased my level of responsibility based on my performance and abilities."
- **"Why have you been out of work for so long?"** (A stress question)

Navigating Unemployment

- "I spent some time re-evaluating my past experience and the current job market to see what direction I wanted to take".
- "I had some offers but I'm not just looking for another job; I'm looking for a career."
- **"What do you know about our company? Why do you want to work here?"** This is where your research on the company will come in handy.
 - "You are a small/large firm and a leading force in the local/national economy"
 - "Your company is a leader in your field and growing."
 - "Your company has a superior product/service."

You might try to get the interviewer to give you additional information about the company by saying that you are very interested in learning more about the company objectives. This will help you to focus your response on relevant areas.

- **"What is your greatest accomplishment?"** Give a specific illustration from your previous or current job where you saved the company money or helped increase their profits. If you have just graduated from college, try to find some accomplishment from your school work, part-time jobs, extra-curricular or volunteer activities.
- **"Why should we hire you?"** (A stress question) Highlight your background based on the company's current needs. Recap your qualifications keeping the interviewer's job description in mind. If you don't have much experience, talk about how your education, training, and experience prepared you for this job.
- **"Why do you want to make a change now?"**
 - "I want to develop my potential."
 - "The opportunities in my present company are limited."
- **"Tell me about a problem you had in your last job and how you resolved it."** The employer wants to assess your analytical skills and see if you are a team player. Select a problem from your last job and explain how you solved it.

Some Questions You Should Ask

- "What are the company's current challenges?"
- "Could you give me a more detailed job description?"
- "Why is this position open?"
- "Are there opportunities for advancement?"
- "To whom would I report?"

Closing Phase

During the closing phase of an interview, you will be asked whether you have any other questions. Ask any relevant question that has not yet been answered. Highlight any of your strengths that have not been discussed. If another interview is to be scheduled, get the necessary information. If this is the final interview, find out when the decision is to be made and when you can call. Thank the interviewer by name and say good-bye.

Do:

- Be sincere and direct

Navigating Unemployment

- Be attentive and polite
- Ask relevant questions
- Answer questions concisely
- Use specific examples to illustrate points

Don't:

- Smoke
- Try to control the entire interview
- Bring up salary, benefits or working hours
- Be too serious
- Let your depression or discouragement show
- Make negative comments about anyone or anything, including former employers
- Look at your watch
- Take extensive notes

§ 6.3.3. After the Interview

You are not finished yet! It is important to assess the interview shortly after it is concluded. Following your interview you should:

- Write down the name and title (be sure the spelling is correct) of the interviewer
- Review what the job entails and record what the next step will be
- Note your reactions to the interview; include what went well and what went poorly
- Assess what you learned from the experience and how you can improve your performance in future interviews
- Make sure you send a thank you note within 24 hours; your thank you note should:
 - Be hand-written only if you have a very good handwriting; most people type thank you notes
 - Be on good quality paper
 - Be simple and brief
 - Express your appreciation for the interviewer's time
 - Show enthusiasm for the job
 - Get across that you want the job and can do it

Everyone knows that a thank you letter should be sent after an interview, but very few people actually send one. Make sure you are one of those few; it could give you the edge.

- **Phone follow-up.** If you were not told during the interview when a hiring decision will be made, call after one week.
 - If you learn that the decision has not been made, find out whether you are still under consideration for the job.
 - Ask if there are any other questions the interviewer might have about your qualifications and offer to come in for another interview if necessary.
 - Reiterate that you are very interested in the job.
 - If you learn that you did not get the job, try to find out why.

Navigating Unemployment

- Try asking whether the interviewer can think of anyone else who might be able to use someone with your abilities, either in another department or at another company.
- If you are offered the job, you have to decide whether you want it.
 - If you are not sure, thank the employer and ask for several days to think about it.
 - Ask any other questions you might need answered to help you with the decision.
 - If you know you want the job and have all the information you need, accept the job with thanks and get the details on when you start.
 - Ask whether the employer will be sending a letter of confirmation, as it is best to have the offer in writing.

§ 6.3.4. Illegal Questions

During an interview, you may be asked some questions that are considered illegal. It is illegal for an interviewer to ask you questions related to sex, age, race, religion, national origin, or marital status, or to delve into your personal life for information that is not job-related. What can you do if you are asked an illegal question? Take a moment to evaluate the situation. Ask yourself questions like:

- How uncomfortable has this question made me feel?
- Does the interviewer seem unaware that the question is illegal?
- Is this interviewer going to be my boss?

Then respond in a way that is comfortable for you. If you decide to answer the question, be succinct and try to move the conversation back to an examination of your skills and abilities as quickly as possible. For example, if asked about your age, you might reply, "I'm in my forties, and I have a wealth of experience that would be an asset to your company." If you are not sure whether you want to answer the question, first ask for a clarification of how this question relates to your qualifications for the job. You may decide to answer if there is a reasonable explanation.

If you feel there is no justification for the question, you might say that you do not see the relationship between the question and your qualifications for the job and you prefer not to answer it.

§ 6.4. Additional Advice¹⁵

The interview should be regarded as a focused business conversation. Use this time to learn more about what the employer's needs are, and express what you can do to meet those needs. In many cases, you will interview twice for a position: once in a brief screening overview, and once in a meeting specifically focused on the job opening.

Most employers do not hire on the basis of qualifications alone: personality, confidence, enthusiasm, a positive outlook, and excellent communication skills weigh in heavily on the selection process.

After your cover letter and résumé, the interview is your best opportunity to impress the employer. You can accomplish this by using effective interviewing skills. The best way to do this is to:

- Prepare a brief presentation of your background

¹⁵ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsrvce/interviews-effective.htm

Navigating Unemployment

- Prepare thoughtful answers to potential interviewing questions
- Prepare well researched questions about the company
- Develop an effective strategy to market yourself

Also consider what the job has to offer so that you can discuss it with the employer.

Remember that interviewing is a skill as well, and becomes easier with practice. Most *CTWorks* Career Centers have workshops (<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ctworks/cldrloc.htm>) in Interviewing Skills designed to help you improve in this area.

Be Prepared

It is very important to prepare for the interview by researching the job opening and the company. You can accomplish this in some of the following ways:

- Request company materials, such as an annual report or job descriptions
- Use library or career center resources;
- Ask friends, teachers or colleagues about the company
- Look at the company's home page on the Internet (if they have one)

If you have researched the job opening, then you will be able to show the employer specifically how your qualifications meet the job requirements.

Practice! Practice! Practice!

Prepare clear, concise answers to the questions found in the interview questions section ([§ 6.5.](#)). Practice your answers with a friend or in front of a mirror. Ask for constructive feedback on your performance. Try to avoid using phrases such as "you know ... ", and "like ... " And, try not to sound as if you're scripting every answer. The most successful candidates are those that practice the most.

Interview Logistics

The more you know the better. Try to find out when the interview is scheduled, what to expect, how long you will be there, and whether you will be speaking to one person or more.

Interview Professionalism

Arrive early, approximately 5-10 minutes. If you are not sure where the company is, call ahead for exact directions. Leave some extra time for unexpected delays such as traffic, parking, etc. If you are running late, let someone know immediately. Leave some extra time to re-read your résumé, settle down, and be ready for the interview.

Dress for Success!

Dress appropriately based on the environment of the job opening. If you will be working in an office or other business environment, wear a professional business suit; if you will be working in a more relaxed environment (such as a warehouse or a manufacturing environment) neat and clean pants, shirts, skirts, and dresses are acceptable. Women should avoid wearing too much jewelry or make-up, and men should

Navigating Unemployment

avoid dressing too flashy or wearing too much cologne. Remember that you want to make a good first impression!

Be Organized

Carry a notepad to jot things down (but don't be preoccupied with taking notes during the interview). Bring extra copies of your résumé, and have names, addresses, and telephone numbers of references (in case the employer asks). And, it's always a good idea to have a list of questions for the employer.

Presenting Yourself

Volunteering relevant information about yourself will make the interviewing process easier on you. Think about how you want to present yourself (experience, education, skills, etc.). Review your résumé to see what the employer might consider strengths or weaknesses. Think about how you can answer difficult questions accurately and positively.

Honesty

The interview gives the employer the chance to get to know you. While you do want to sell yourself, answer each question with an honest response.

Keep It Positive

Never say anything negative about past experiences or employers. Always try to say something positive about the experience. Try to be enthusiastic — if you are very interested in the job, let the employer know it.

Show Interest

One of the best ways to show your interest in the job is to research the company beforehand. Ask questions about its products and services. Also ask questions that build on your interview discussion. This will demonstrate that not only are you interested, but that you are paying close attention to the employer. Insightful comments on what the employer says can take you far. At the end of the interview, it is permissible to ask when you might hear from the employer.

Don't Discuss Salary

Do not bring up the issue of salary during the first interview. Rather, try to find out as much as you can about general salary levels of the company beforehand. If the employer asks about your salary expectations, try to give a general answer.

After-Interview Notes

Take time after the interview to jot down anything that comes to mind that might influence your decision of whether or not to accept the position. Examples are your impressions, and any remaining questions. This is especially helpful in keeping track of facts about each employer if you are interviewing with several different companies.

Navigating Unemployment

Follow-Up

Always write a thank you note to the employer within 24 hours of the interview, even if you are not interested in the job, or if the interview was unproductive. It is important to let the employer know that you appreciate the time that was spent with you.

§ 6.5. Interview Questions¹⁶

About Your Qualifications

- Tell me about yourself.
- How do you think someone who knows you well would describe you?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Tell me the contribution you can make to the organization.
- Tell me about a professional assignment you've handled.
- Tell me about your school experiences.
- What was your most rewarding college experience?
- Describe your most meaningful work experience.
- How do you think someone you have worked with would describe you?
- Why are you the most qualified for this position?
- Do you have supervisory experience?

About Your Ability To Be Effective In The Work Environment

- Why do you want this job?
- What do you know about this company?
- What kind of work environment makes you feel the most comfortable?
- How do you determine whether or not you want to work for a particular company?
- How are you a team player?
- Do you work well under pressure?
- How do you handle conflict?
- Name a major problem you encountered and describe how you dealt with it.
- How competitive are you?
- What do you expect from your supervisor?
- What qualities should a successful manager demonstrate?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinate.

About Your Career Goals

- What are your long term career goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?
- What career rewards are most important to you?
- How do you spend your spare time?
- What are your salary requirements?
- Are you willing to relocate?

¹⁶ www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/jobsvrce/interviews-questions.htm

Navigating Unemployment

Welcome To The Real World!

Here are some tough questions employers ask that are specifically designed to determine your career potential:

- Why did you choose (name of school)?
- Why did you want to major in (name of major)?
- What course did you like to most? The least?
- What things did you learn in school that you could use on the job?
- Do you think your grades adequately represent your abilities?
- We have hired people from your school before, but they have not worked out. What makes you different?
- What problems did you see in your school? How would you go about changing it?
- Tell me about your accomplishments that show you have initiative and a willingness to work.

Difficult Questions

- Have you ever had a boss you disliked? Why did you dislike him/her?
- How would someone that dislikes you describe you?
- Tell me about a group you participated in that was having problems:
 - What was your role?
 - How did you handle it?
 - What was the outcome?
 - What would you have done differently?
 - How could the group have improved its performance?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure and how you reacted to it.
- Tell me about a time when you were under considerable pressure to meet one or more goals.
- Describe a problematic situation at work and how you resolved it.
- Give me an example of how you are a risk taker.
- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
- How are you motivated?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why should we hire you?
- Give a one sentence positioning statement of yourself.
- How do you decide what to do first on a new project?
- How did you handle a situation where you did not agree with something your boss asked you to do?
- What did you like about your last job? Dislike?
- What would you like to be doing five years from now?

The Stress Interview

- Would you like to have your boss's job?
- Sell me this computer you see on my desk.
- Why should I hire you when I could fill this job within the company?

Navigating Unemployment

- Why weren't you working for so long?
- Describe a situation where your work was criticized.
- Your resume shows that you were with your last company for a number of years with limited increase in rank or salary. What can you tell me about this?

For Career Changers

- Why do you think you would like this kind of work?
- How do you expect to become proficient in those areas you are unfamiliar with?

Tell Us About Yourself

This is one of the most difficult questions to answer, but yields you the greatest opportunity. Do not give a long autobiographical lecture; rather, just organize your thoughts around why you are interested in and qualified for the job.

Do You Have Any Questions For Us?

Always answer yes and be prepared to have some. Otherwise, you'll appear to be disinterested. It is important to ask questions that show a response to what you have learned from the employer. Avoid trying to sound scripted. Here are some examples:

Advancement

- Can you tell me how success in this position is measured?
- How do you encourage your employees to keep current with professional developments in the field?
- Can you describe your training program for me?
- What is a typical career path for someone who has been in this position?
- What is the time frame for advancement?
- What is the retention rate for people in this position?
- Does the company tend to promote from within?

Responsibilities

- Tell me about a typical day on this job.
- What is the most challenging aspect of this job?
- Who would I work with most closely?
- How often can I expect to relocate?

Being On A New Job

- What is the most challenging aspect to this job for someone who is new to the company?
- What will the new (job title) have to accomplish in the next six months?
- What are your expectations for newly hired employees?
- What qualities do newly hired employees possess?
- How would you describe a typical first assignment?

Navigating Unemployment

More About The Company

- Why is the position open?
- What are your major projects for the coming year?
- What is the structure of the department where the position is located?
- What is the work environment like?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?

Navigating Unemployment

§ 7. Job Search supports

You'll be happy to know there are many supports and aids out there to help you find a job. This section will outline aids offered to job seekers at no cost, starting with an overview of *CTWorks* (§ 7.1.) then offering helpful websites (§ 7.2.), including job search websites (§ 7.2.3.). In addition to the services outlined here, see section § 2.4. for additional advice on where to go for support specifically aimed at those who have exhausted unemployment or are ineligible in some other way.

§ 7.1. CT Works¹⁷

The *CTWorks* system is a partnership of organizations working as a team to promote a universal approach to providing effective workforce assistance to job seekers and businesses. This collaboration of state, regional and local organizations is designed to provide a seamless delivery system of programs and services.

CTWorks One Stop Career Centers are located throughout the state, offering resources ranging from employment workshops and résumé assistance for job seekers, to education opportunities and job data for those seeking a new career, to recruitment services and tax credit programs for employers. Centers also provide Labor Market Information, an electronic job bank and specialized veterans' services. Whether a person is unemployed, looking for a different job, or interested in getting back into the labor market, *CTWorks* services are available to anyone, regardless of employment status.

Below are details for the Danbury *CTWorks* office as an example of services available at these locations. There is an office near you. Visit the following website to locate an office close to you:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ContactInfo/CTWorks/Directory.htm>

For **Stamford** *CTWorks* and Southwest CT in particular, visit: <http://ctworks.avenet.net/>.

Danbury *CTWorks*¹⁸

4 Liberty St
Danbury CT, 06810
(203) 437-3380
Monday - Friday, 8:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Partners

- CT Department of Labor (DOL)
- Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
- Danbury Public Library
- Danbury Adult Education
- Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC)
- Department of Social Services - Temporary Assistance To Needy Families, Welfare to Work

¹⁷ <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ctworks/ctworks.htm>

¹⁸ http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ContactInfo/CTWorks/DANBY_Info.htm#FactSheet

Navigating Unemployment

- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
- Workforce Connection
- Family Services of Greater Waterbury

Relationships/Linkages To Other Organizations

- Charter Oak State College
- Danbury Area Adult Education Departments
- State Vocational Technical Schools
- CT Association For United Spanish Action (CAUSA)
- TBICO - job readiness and employment support
- Job Corps
- Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)
- Community Action Committee of Danbury (CACD)

Collocated With The Following Organizations

- NRWIB – Northwest Region Workforce Investment Board
- NVCC -- Naugatuck Valley Community College
- Workforce Connection
- Family Services of Greater Waterbury

Services Offered

- Job Search Workshops
- Veterans Services

Workshops

- Résumé Basics
- Interviewing Techniques
- Job Search Strategies
- Program Provider
- Danbury Networking Group

Please refer to Danbury's Free Workshops Calendar for session dates and times:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/danbury/danbcal.htm>

Business Services (Danbury Area)

- Apprenticeship
- Labor Exchange: Job Recruitment/Job Placement
- Connecticut Business On-the-Job Training Grants (TAA/TRA)
- Labor Market Information (LMI)
- Training Consulting; Evaluation / Application assistance – Employer Training Grants
- Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC)

Navigating Unemployment

§ 7.2. Helpful Websites¹⁹

§ 7.2.1. Résumé Assistance

<http://resume.monster.com> – Resume help on the monster board

<http://www.pongoresume.com> – Build and publish resumes online

www.accounting.com/employment/resumehelp.htm - Accounting resumes

www.collegegrad.com/resumes - Resume resource for entry level/college grads

www.damngood.com – Resume help from Damn Good Resume

www.eresumes.com – Rebecca Smith’s Electronic Resume Info

www.home.jobopenings.net/resume.htm - Resume help

www.jobstar.org/tools/resume - Jobstar Resume Help

www.resume-help.org

www.resume-resource.com/article11.html – Email resume etiquette

<http://quintcareers.com/resres.html> – Resumes/cover letters

www.rileyguide.com/resprep.html – Resume help from the Riley Guide

www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html – Email and online resume posting guidelines from Riley Guide

www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes.html – Free guide to resume writing

www.VisualCV.com – Create cutting edge internet based resumes for professionals

§ 7.2.2. Job/Career Guides

<http://jobstar.org> – Job star central, a job search guide from California local libraries. Includes information on Resumes, Careers, Salaries, the Hidden Job Market, and more.

<http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/bestcompanies/2009/index.html> – Fortune Magazine’s 100 Best Companies to work for.

<http://monstertrak.com> – Job track, a job listing service for college graduates

<http://quintcareers.4jobs.com> – Quintessential Careers 4 Jobs, Quintessential careers college, careers, and job guide, Great Resource!

<http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org> – Science careers from journal *Science*.

¹⁹ www.ct.gov/brs/cwp/view.asp?a=3890&q=456896

Navigating Unemployment

<http://tbrnet.com> – “The Best Resume” Net, Employment info to help improve your resumes and cover letters, access to job search books, and creating your own HTML resume for the internet.

§ 7.2.3. Job Searches

www.jobcentral.org/ct – Connecticut’s job search site. Put your résumé up here for better results.

www.aaanet.org/profdev/index.cfm – The AAA careers page is designed to be a focal point for the world of anthropology careers and employment opportunities.

www.aeps.com – aviation employee placement service, positions in the airline industry

www.agcareers.com – agricultural careers, human resources services to the agricultural and food industries

www.agrilabourpool.com – agricultural labour pool for the U.S. and Canada offering recruitment services and job seekers assistance in permanent and seasonal agricultural work

www.buildingtradesdir.com/guilds/connecticut/index.html - Site listing all building and trade organizations and employers in Connecticut. This does not list jobs, only employers.

www.careeronestop.org/jobseekertools – workforce development professionals, job seekers, and public users rated more than 600 online job and career tools. Find the most recommended tools in each of six categories, including General Job Boards, Niche Job Boards, Career Planning Tools, Career Exploration Tools, Social Media Job Search, and other tools

www.careers.org – Contains a host of links to jobs, employers, federal jobs, colleges, and community colleges.

www.cdnimmigration.com – Canadian Commonwealth Job Search Site, provides a range of immigration and employment outplacement services to people seeking to improve their lifestyle by coming to live in Canada

www.ceweekly.com – Jobs for Engineering, IT/IS and technical personnel throughout the world

www.collegegrad.com – College grad job hunter, one stop entry level job search shopping for college students and recent grads. Includes information on resumes, job interviewing, offer negotiation, and more

www.creativehotlist.com – Creative Arts hotlist, a customizable online application for connecting talent, companies, and services. Enables users to find individuals, companies, and resources for any aspect of the creative marketplace including job openings creative services, artists, designers, programmers, printers, service bureaus, schools, and clubs

www.ct.gov/dol - State of Connecticut Dept. of Labor website. Access to jobs, unemployment insurance and appeals division, information on programs and services available to jobseekers and business customers (employers), and labor market information.

Navigating Unemployment

www.ctjobs.com – Employment opportunities, career links, a resume bank, and calendar of upcoming events.

www.ctvets.org – Connecticut “Veterans Services” page, an excellent source of info for US Military Veterans anywhere in the country with links to state benefits, federal benefits, jobs, and more. Note: Takes a while to load the home Page.

www.employmentguide.com – Job seekers can browse worldwide career opportunities or gain career advice.

www.fbi.gov/employment/employ.htm - Job seekers can find jobs with the FBI.

www.flipdog.com – FlipDog crawls the web and links to job openings found on employers websites (big and small companies, public and private organizations, etc.). Claims to have the largest job collection of its kind.

www.getthejob.com – The largest vertical job search engine for direct employer jobs only. Job postings from the corporate career centers of thousands of companies, indexing over two million jobs at any time. No postings from 3rd party recruiters and headhunters, only real job postings.

www.goodworksfirst.org – job listing from national public interest community. Jobs with social change organizations.

www.hg.org/employment.html - The sites objective is to make law, government, and related professional information and employment opportunities easily accessible to the legal profession businesses, and consumers.

www.higheredjobs.com – Founded in 1996 to list open positions at colleges and universities. Has one of the largest databases focused exclusively on college and university positions.

www.homefair.com – Provides equivalent salaries for jobs based on the differences in cost of living in different geographical areas. To access this information, once you enter the site, go to “salary Calculator form State Lookup.” Excellent site if relocating to a different area.

www.jobhunt.com – Site offers a free online guide to net employment resources with search engines

www.jobhuntersbible.com – (What Color is Your Parachute website). Excellent career choice/skill assessment site provided by the authors of *What Color is Your Parachute?*, this site is designed as a supplement to the book.

www.jobjunction.com – Contains career information, reference material, and an online job database for executives and professionals.

www.job-search-engine.com – This site allows you to search on several websites at the same time. It searches the top USA and Canadian job boards in parallel and real time.

www.jobsearchusa.org – An all-purpose job search website offering job listings from various organizations including not for profits, small businesses, corporations, and educational institutions.

Navigating Unemployment

Developed from the concept of integrating the best features, design practices, and privacy principles of the leading US job search websites.

www.jobsfed.com – The self proclaimed “# 1 private source of federal job information”

www.JobsOver50.com – Free web based employment services dedicated to 50+ job seekers.

www.jobweb.com – Good site for job seekers and employers alike especially those in college seeking summer jobs.

www.marketingjobs.com – Marketing Jobs.

www.nonprofitcareer.com – Serves both employers and job hunters in the non-profit sector. There’s a searchable (though not browseable) directory of listings, resume posting, plus information on job fairs, a directory of nonprofit organizations, and volunteer opportunities and profiles of some nonprofits.

www.nowhiring.com – Offers one convenient source for career information including personalized search agents, automatic matching of jobs against resume, and expert advice on all aspects of the job hunt.

www.ntes.com – Computer and engineering contract employment jobs.

www.nurse.com – A nursing and healthcare communications company and the largest print and electronic publisher of news and information regarding registered nurses. Additional products and services include career fairs, websites, consulting services, and an award-winning seasonal television program.

www.nursefinders.com – Jobs and career info for nurses.

www.onedayonejob.com – Job links, Company Links, Resume Links, all for entry level positions.

www.onlinesports.com/pages/careercenter.html – Sports related career opportunities.

www.onwardhealthcare.com – A leading travel nurse employment agency. Nationwide travel nursing jobs and allied healthcare assignments, as well as local per diem opportunities.

www.recruitersonline.com – Recruiters, employment firms, and search professionals/headhunters place job openings here.

<http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/career/jobintern.php> - University of Buffalo Career and Job link websites; site categorized by general information and listings, corporate employment pages, non-profit/education/research-related jobs, and federal and state government jobs.

www.taonline.com – Includes an online resume bank where you can post your resume on the internet, find job leads listed from military friendly employers, get information about franchising and starting your own business, and obtain advice and guidance from those who have successfully made the transition from military duty to civilian life.

www.telecomcareers.net – Job search and career site for technology professionals designed to improve the work and life of the technology professional.

Navigating Unemployment

www.tms.org/Society?careers.html – Positions wanted ads and career resources from the *Journal of Minerals, Metals & Materials Society*.

www.truecareers.com – Degreed professionals

www.tsa.gov – All federal security screening professional positions can be found on this site.

www.usajobs.gov – This is the federal government's official personnel office. It has the latest information on worldwide federal job openings.

www.uscg.mil/hq/cgpc/cpm/jobs/vacancies.htm – Civilian jobs in the US Coast Guard.

§ 7.2.4. Avoiding Online Job Scams²⁰

Job seekers who use online job search web sites must be careful to avoid a type of job scam in which the applicant is asked to accept payment to his or her own bank account. These are known as payment-forwarding or payment-transfer scams.

Payment-transfer scams involve a con artist who pretends to be an employer. The con artist uses a job ad to lure an unsuspecting job seeker, or they may use information from a resume they have found online. Such con artists can be quite convincing, and may even steal company names and corporate logos to convince victims that they are legitimate employers.

After the con artist has won the job seeker's trust, the con artist tricks the job seeker into giving up bank account numbers. The reasons given for this can be clever. One ploy is to tell the job seeker they can only deliver paychecks by "direct deposit.

The "job" a job seeker will be asked to do involves forwarding or wiring money from a personal bank account, a PayPal account, or from Western Union to another account. The other account is often overseas. As part of their pay, the job seeker is instructed to keep a small percentage of the money as their payment. Sometimes the payment for making the money transfer is as low as \$15. Sometimes it is as high as several hundred or several thousand dollars. Almost always, the money the victims are transferring is stolen, and therefore, the victims are committing theft and wire fraud. Usually, this kind of scam involves at least two or three victims.

There are many variations of payment-forwarding scams. Following are very simple tips that will go far to protect you from falling victim with some clarifications noted below. Again, this scam can be quite clever and refined.

1. Do not give personal bank account, PayPal account, or credit card numbers to an employer.
2. Do not agree to have funds or paychecks direct deposited to any of your accounts by a new employer.
3. Do not forward, transfer, or "wire" money to an employer.
4. Do not transfer money and retain a portion for payment.

²⁰ <https://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs25a-JobSeekerPriv2.htm>

Navigating Unemployment

Legitimate employers do not usually need your bank account numbers. While direct deposit of a paycheck is a convenience, if that is the only option an employer offers, then you should not accept the job. A legitimate employer will give you the option of direct deposit, but not demand that it is used. You should wait until you have met the employer in person before agreeing to a direct deposit option.

There is one exception to this: the U.S. government typically does require that employees agree to direct deposit. If you have been interviewed in person, and you are sure that you are dealing with a government agency, then agreeing to direct deposit is not a problem. Also, if you have been working for an employer for a while and you are very sure about their legitimacy, then agreeing to a direct deposit is usually fine. This is especially true if you have received a number of paychecks from the employer and you have met the employer in person. "Work from home" and telecommuting jobs are most at risk when agreeing to direct deposit, especially from brand new employers. Use caution and good sense.

Regarding payment transfers, while some jobs may require an employee to make transfers for employers, legitimate employers making this request will go to extraordinary efforts to check the job seeker prior to making the hire. This would involve meeting the jobseeker in person and conducting rigorous interviews. This kind of job hire would not be made via email or even the telephone or a single meeting. And a legitimate employer would typically ask you to make transfers from their business accounts, not yours. You need to draw a line and understand that transferring money for employers from your personal bank account or personal PayPal account is off-limits, period.

Known Red Flags

Payment-forwarding scams contain certain "red-flags" that should alert you to fraudulent job ads. Here are the known red flags:

- Request for bank account numbers.
- Request for Social Security number (SSN).
- Request to "scan the ID" of a job seeker, for example, a drivers' license. Scam artists will say they need to scan job seekers' IDs to "verify identity." This is not a legitimate request.
- A contact email address that is not a primary domain. For example, an employer calling itself "Omega Inc." with a Yahoo! email address.
- Misspellings and grammatical mistakes in the job ad.
- Monster.com lists descriptive words in job postings that are tip-offs to fraud. Their list includes "package-forwarding," "money transfers," "wiring funds," "eBay," and "PayPal." World Privacy Forum researchers also found that the terms "Foreign Agent Agreement" often appears in contracts and emails sent to job seekers.

Please see Appendix A (<http://www.worldprivacyforum.org/jobscamreportpt1.html#appendixA>) in the World Privacy Forum report for examples of what the emails and contracts for this kind of money transfer scam look like. The Timeline (<http://www.worldprivacyforum.org/jobscamtimeline.html>) has multiple examples of what the fraudulent job ads look like.

Navigating Unemployment

Effective Steps for Victims of Job Scams

Unfortunately, not everyone will escape job fraud in time. Job seekers who are victimized by payment-forwarding scams are advised to take the following steps.

1. Close all bank accounts at the bank where the scam took place. It is a good idea to change banks to avoid "social engineering" attempts by the con artists to fool bank workers into giving out new account information.
2. Order a credit report from all three credit bureaus every 2 to 3 months. Watch the reports for unusual activity. If you have given your SSN to the fraudster, we advise that you place fraud alerts on your three credit reports - Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion. For information on how to establish fraud alerts, read Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 17a on identity theft, <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs17a.htm>.
3. Victims of payment-forwarding scams should contact their local Secret Service field agent. The Secret Service handles complaints of international fraud. Fraud victims should also file a police report with local law enforcement officials as well.
4. Victims should report the company name, the job posting, and all contact names to the job sites where the scam was posted.
5. Victims should permanently close all email addresses that were associated with the job fraud.

§ 7.2.5. Helps For Those With Disabilities

Americans with Disabilities Act Technical Assistance Center: www.adaptiveenvironments.org

American School for the Deaf: www.asd-1817.org

Board of Education and Services for the Blind: <http://www.ct.gov/besb>

Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired: www.state.ct.us/cdhi

Connect to Work Center: <http://www.ct.gov/connecttowork>

Connect-ability: <http://www.connect-ability.com>

Connecticut Tech Act Project: <http://www.cttechact.com>

CT School to Work Transition GPS (NGA): <http://www.ctschooltowork.com>

Department of Administrative Services: www.das.state.ct.us

Department of Education-Special Education/Transition: www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/special/index.htm

Department of Labor: www.ctdol.state.ct.us

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services: www.dmhas.state.ct.us

Department of Mental Retardation: www.dmr.state.ct.us

Department of Social Services web site: www.dss.state.ct.us

Navigating Unemployment

Disability Resources, Inc.: www.disabilityresources.org

Disability World: www.DisabilityWorld.org

Governor's Coalition for Youth with Disabilities: www.geyd.org

Infoline: www.infoline.org

JAN (Job Accommodation Network): <http://askjan.org/>

Keep the Promise Coalition: <http://www.ctkeepthepromise.org/>

Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) Vocational Rehabilitation (121 Program): www.tribalvr.org

New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Resource & Education Center:
<http://www.neatmarketplace.org/>

Office of Disability Employment Policy: www.dol.gov/odep/welcome.html

Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities/Client Assistance Program:
www.state.ct.us/opapd

People to Jobs Regional Transportation Task Force www.peopletojobs.org

Presidential Task Force on Employment of People with Disabilities: www.disAbility.gov

Rehabilitation Services Administration: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html>

Social Security Administration: www.ssa.gov/disability

Supportive Housing Employment & Training Services Directory: <http://csh.org/employmentdirectory>

The National Center on Workforce and Disability: www.onestops.info

Index

2

2-1-1, 6

C

Career Fairs, 10
Connect to Work Center, 56
Connecticut Jobs & Career ConneCTion, 1
Craigslist, 1
CT JobCentral, 6
CT Works, 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16, 20, 24, 48

D

Department of Labor, 1, 6, 56
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, 56
Department of Social Services, 6, 56

E

Education, 23, 25, 26, 56, 57
Employment, 2, 10, 20, 51, 52, 57

H

Helpful Websites, 50

I

Identifying and Explaining Job Skills, 15
Infoline, 6, 57
Informational Interview, 11
 Informational Interview Questions, 12
 Informational Interview Request Letters, 27
Interview, 12, 27, 33, 34, 42, 43, 44
 Additional Advice, 41
 After the Interview, 40
 Before the Interview, 36
 During the Interview, 37
 Group Interview, 34
 Illegal Questions, 41
 Interview Questions, 44
 Interview Structure, 34
 Interviewing Strategies, 35
 Multiple Interviews, 33
 Screening Interview, 33
 Situational Interview, 34
 Stress Interview, 33, 45
 Structured Interview, 33

Targeted Interview, 33
Types of Interviews, 33
Unstructured Interview, 33

J

Job Hunt, 8
Job Searches, 51
Job/Career Guides, 50

L

Letters, 27, 31
 Acceptance and Decline Letters, 27, 32
 Common Cover Letter Mistakes, 30
 Cover Letters, 27, 28, 29, 30, 50, 51
 Email Letters, 32
 Thank You Letters, 27, 31

R

Résumé, 6, 14, 21, 25
 Advice on Your Résumé, 14
 Building Your Résumé, 20
 Functional Résumé, 21, 22, 26
 General Guide to an Effective Résumé, 22
 Résumé Assistance, 50
 Reverse-Chronological Résumé, 21, 25
 Sample Résumés, 25
 Types of Résumés, 20
 What Does a Résumé Accomplish?, 14

S

Social Security, 4, 5, 57
Social Security Administration, 57
Social Security Number, 4, 5

T

Transportation, 57

U

Unemployment Insurance, 2, 4
 Eligibility, 2
 Employment Not Covered by Unemployment, 2
 Filing a Continued Claim for Unemployment Benefits, 5
 Filing an Initial Claim for Unemployment Benefits, 4
 Options for if you are about to exhaust unemployment, 6

