

How to Get Your First Job (for Teens)

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Applying for your first job is a rite of passage for many teenagers. Not only are they a great way to earn money, but they'll give you plenty of experience and work skills along the way. Once you've found a job that works with your school schedule, prepare a resume and cover letter for your potential employer. If you catch their eye, they'll invite you in for an interview to determine if you're the best fit. With lots of hard work and preparation, your first job is only one application away.

Part 1

Part 1 of 4: Finding Job Opportunities



1 Look for a job in a convenient location for you. You'll want a job you can travel to without many complications on the days you work. If you don't have your [driver's license](#), working at a bookstore thirty miles away from home might not be the best idea. Choose a job that you could easily walk or bike to, or ask an older relative if they could drive you.



2 Find jobs that can accommodate your schedule. Some jobs are better than others, if you're still in school. If the job requires you to work afternoons but you're in high school, you'll want to apply for other jobs. Ask your potential employer if they hire students and whether they'll be flexible with your schedule. Having a job is not worth failing school grades.

- Choose a job that does not exceed 15 hours a week for a balanced school schedule. [1]
- Most states (and countries) have limits for how many hours teens can work a week. [2]



3 Make use of your talents. This may be your first job search, but you can use your skills to pick up work. Maybe you're in your school band. Start offering oboe lessons, or look for a job at music stores in your area. If you have good school grades, become a **tutor** or apply for jobs at your local library.

- Take some time with your parents or a mentor to write a list of all your talents, and brainstorm ways you could translate them into job opportunities.
- You could also look for jobs fixing what you love. Computer geeks, for example, might look for computer repair jobs.[3]



4 Ask around for odd jobs in your area. Jobs in your neighborhood can be convenient for your location and schedule. You could go door to door asking if your neighbors need their lawn mowed or leaves raked. Or, if you're good with kids, you could **babysit** for young families.^[4]

- To start babysitting, start by asking parents' friends or older relatives. From there, you can build up experience as a good babysitter.^[5]



5 Try a retail or food service job. Both retail and food service are excellent first job opportunities because these employers often hire teenagers. Jobs in food service are a good way to develop customer service skills and gain cooking experience. Retail jobs are great for sociability, organization, and learning to operate cash registers.^[6]

- Some teens enjoy waitering/waitressing jobs as a way to make more money per hour thanks to tips.^[7]



6 Check local job boards. Look at your city's classifieds section or Craigslist site for job openings. On most job board websites, you can narrow your search based on location, experience, and job details. Email the employer to find out application requirements, and send your materials in once you've found a potential job.^[8]

Part 2 of 4: Preparing a Resume



1 Think about what your potential employer might look for. List skills and experiences relevant to the job you're searching for. Suppose, for example, that you're applying for work at a pet store. Your grades in Astronomy class might not be relevant, but your volunteering experience at the local animal shelter is. You have limited space on your resume, so be sure that you only include relevant information.^[9]

- If relevant, include education achievements like your GPA, any awards you've won, or projects you've completed.
- Remember to add your contact information (especially your email and phone number) so employers can contact you.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Student Body President and AP Student
- Co-founded Paws Welfare Club with 50+ members
- Raised \$500+ monthly for stray cats and dogs
- Planned and organized three IT projects for the local Red Cross chapter

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Events Coordinator (Summer 2016)
Plano Blackout Theatre, Plano, TX

Photography Assistant (Summer 2017)
The Family Center, Garland, TX

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2 List your leadership experience. Once you've gained work experience, you can put your work history on your resume. For your first job, though, include information about any leadership positions you've held to show that you're committed and motivated.^[10] Maybe you were your school's class president, or maybe you volunteered as a summer camp counselor. Include the position title, when you accomplished it, and skills you learned from the experience.

- Even if you've never been officially employed, you can add part time work (like babysitting or yard work) or community service experiences.^[11]
- Never lie about experiences on your resume. Your potential employer will eventually find out, and this will most likely prevent you from getting the job (or keeping it if you already have it). Highlight what you have accomplished as honestly as possible.^[12]

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- Punctuality
- Effective communication and teamwork skills
- Awareness of various stocking procedures and associated paperwork
- Strong understanding of customer service processes and principles
- Ability to stand on feet for long periods of time
- Sun Certified Java Programmer (SCJP)

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3 Highlight your skills. Include any skills that would be relevant to your employer. You might be a good listener, fluent in French, or familiar with Java programming. Skills can include certifications you have, your creative abilities, languages you speak, or software you know how to use.^[13]

- Mold your skillset to traits companies look for. Instead of "loves to read," for example, you could put "strong reading comprehension." Hobbies won't catch an employer's eye, but profitable skills will.



4 **Have your parents or a trusted adult proofread your resume.** Once you've finished building your resume, give it to a close mentor to edit. You'll want to use strong grammatical and spelling skills on your resume. Too many errors could be the reason you don't get an interview. Ask your mentor for advice and how you could best improve your resume.

- Download your resume and cover letter as a **PDF file**. PDF files are compatible with Macs and PCs and usually appear the same on both, so they are the most professional option.

Part 3 of 4: Applying for Jobs



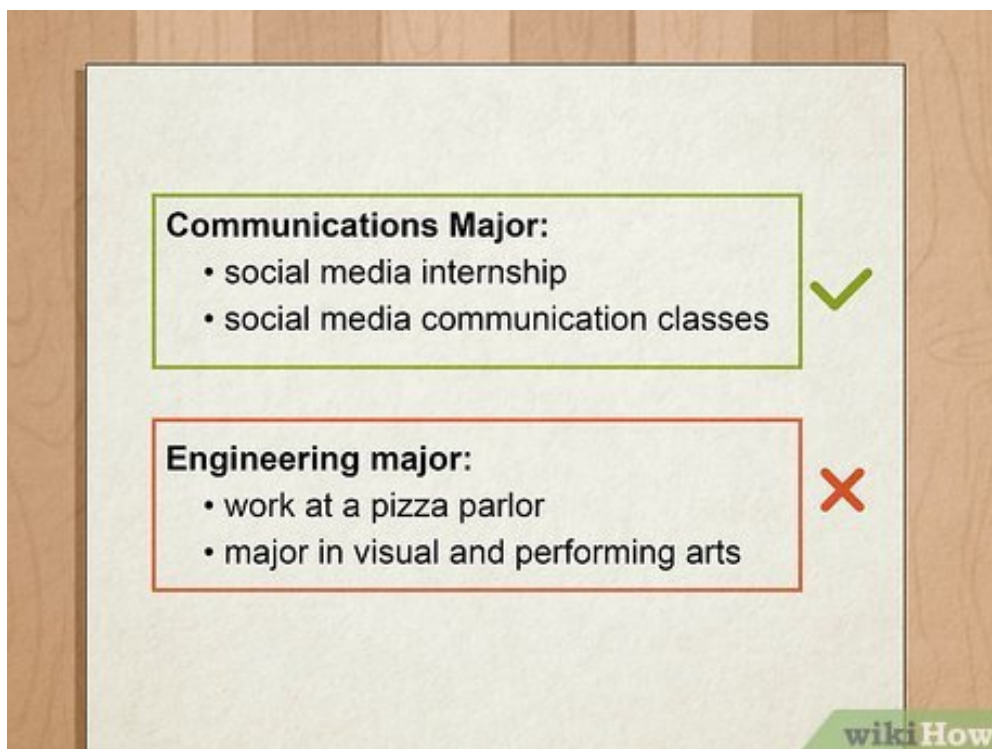
1 Check what experience is needed for the job. Many jobs prefer that their applicants have certifications or work history before they apply. Some employers may offer on-the-job training, but not all do. Before you apply for a lifeguarding job, for example, check to see if you need CPR training. If you're applying for a bakery job, ask whether they prefer applicants with a culinary arts degree.

- Make sure you meet age requirements, too. Certain stores only hire those who are at least 16 or 18. You'll make the most of your time applying to jobs you qualify for.



2 Write a cover letter. Cover letters are a great way to introduce yourself and expand on qualifications you mentioned on your resume. This is your chance to personalize your application and explain why you want to work with an employer. Talk about what you can offer to the company and include any references you might have.

- Never use a relative as a reference. References for your first job application could be teachers, mentors, coaches, or other trusted adults who know your personal character.
- Have a friend or mentor read over your cover letter, too, to catch small mistakes.



3 Tailor your resume to each job application. Before you attach a copy of your resume, read through the job requirements again and edit the resume to fit the job. If you're applying for a front desk position, you could add the skill "great customer service skills." Or, if you're applying for a tutoring job, you could include your class honors.



4 Send your cover letter and resume via email or in person. If you can print out and bring in your resume and cover letter, ask if you can do so. This will give them a face to match with the name and show that you're a serious employee. If not, however, insert the cover letter into the body of your email and include your resume as a file.

- Ask before you deliver a resume in-person. Some employers strongly prefer a digital resume over a print copy.^[14]



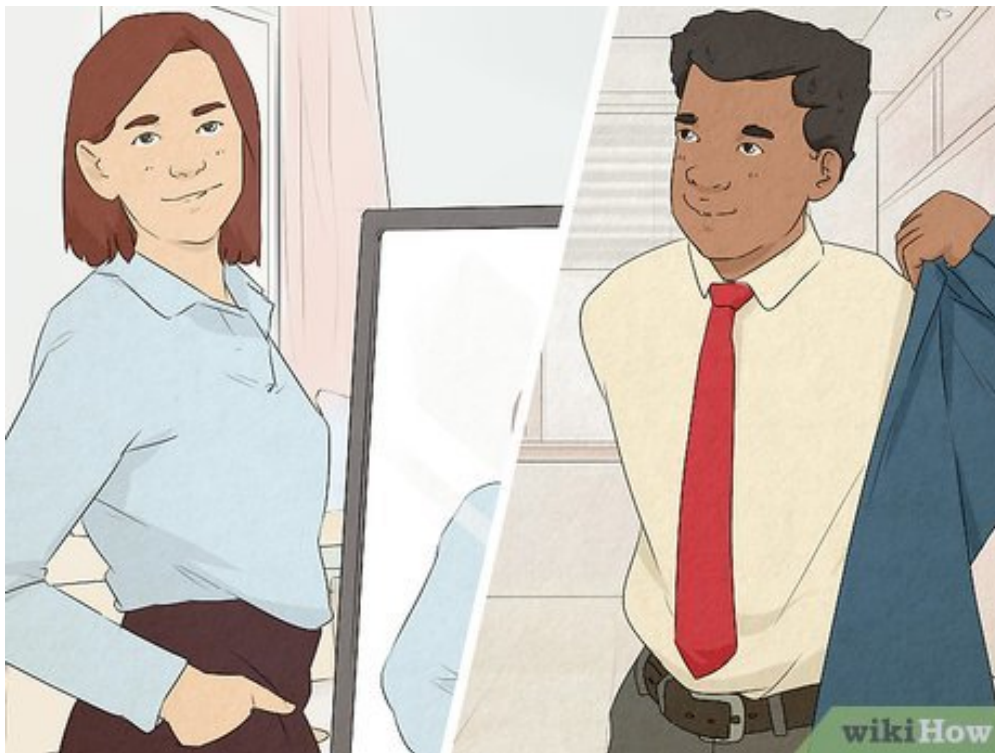
1 Brainstorm a list of your strengths and experiences beforehand. Sit down and freewrite any notable strengths that come to mind. Think of your greatest achievements and what you gained from them: maybe you're a motivated worker thanks to cross country, or maybe you learned responsibility from petsitting your neighbor's dog for a month. Narrow your list down to three or four experiences and the skills you gained from them to bring up during the interview.^[15]

- Match the strengths you prepare to the company's needs. If you're applying for a catering job, for example, you could talk about baking lessons you took at your community center and how you earned your food handler's permit.
- You will likely get asked about your weaknesses as well. Turn your weaknesses into strengths to make a good impression. If you're shy, for example, you could say that you prefer to listen instead of talk but work hard to make your voice heard.
- Think of the things that you value and how they align with the company you're applying for.^[16]



2 Practice interview questions with a friend or family member. Find and print a set of interview questions online, and ask a loved one if they'll read you the questions for practice. At the end of the interview, ask them what their first impressions were and what advice they have. Tell them you want an honest opinion so you receive constructive criticism.^[17] Possible interview questions could include:^[18]

- How did you learn about the opening?
- Why do you want this job?
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a decision. What did you do?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Out of all the other candidates, why should we hire you?



3 Dress in formal clothes. First impressions with your interviewer are important, so you'll want to look your best. The rule of thumb is to dress one notch higher than what work attire will be for this company. If you'll be working in a shorts and a t-shirt, don a button down shirt and slacks. Wear a blouse, blazer, and pencil skirt if the dress code asks for business casual.^[19]

- Pick clothes you feel comfortable and confident in so you're not squirming or self-conscious during the interview.^[20]
- When in doubt, email your interviewer to ask what appropriate dress attire is for their company.^[21]



- 4 Relax, and be positive.** Feeling nervous for an interview is normal, but don't let your anxiety get the best of you. Focus on your strengths and accomplishments in the interview, and emphasize all the good you can offer your employer. If you feel anxious, pause, take a deep breath, and resume talking when you're ready.^[22]
- If you're nervous before your interview, take steps to relax: go on a walk, try some [breathing exercises](#), or listen to a song you love.^[23]
 - Some applicants worry themselves to death because they feel they don't measure up to job requirements. Emphasize your strengths instead of your weaknesses: as long as you show quick learning potential, you have no reason to stress.^[24]



5 Prepare questions to ask the employer afterward. After your interviewer finishes their list of questions, they will likely ask you, "Do you have any questions for me?" Some applicants do not take advantage of this opportunity, but it's a great way to learn more about the company. Ask the interviewer any questions you have: what is their favorite part about working here? How would they describe the company culture?

- Avoid asking about your possible salary, how much time off you'll get, or when lunch breaks are.



6 Follow up with the company within a few days. After twenty-four hours have passed, send a follow-up email thanking the interviewer for their time and reiterating your interest in the position. Let them know you look forward to hearing from them, and ask them for an approximate time they hope to make a decision by.



Community Q&A

Question

Can I go to the manager and ask if there is an open position?



Community Answer

Yes, of course you can! It shows that you have confidence and that you are really interested in the job. Even if they don't have an open position, they will usually tell you of other places that are looking for employees.

Helpful 78 Not Helpful 8

Question

Would I still be able to get a job even if I'm asocial, an introvert, and get nervous over the smallest things?



Community Answer

Yes. Try to find a job that fits for you. Not all jobs involve retail, or talking to people. Jobs such as writing or transcription have limited contact with others.

Helpful 32 Not Helpful 4

Question

What do you do or say if you are applying to your first job?



Community Answer

Follow the guidelines in the article. Highlight any skills and/or experience that may be relevant to the job you're applying for. E.g., if the job involves customer service or working with people, you could tell about volunteer work you've done or leadership roles you've had that have taught you people skills. If applicable, share any education or knowledge you may have that's relevant to the job. Tell them about your positive qualities, show that you understand the company and what it needs from you, and convince them that you'll be a great employee.

Helpful 24 Not Helpful 4

Question

What should my first resume/CV look like?



Community Answer

It should have the basic information, including your name, email and phone number. Include any work experience as well as volunteering experience and other extracurricular mentions.

Helpful 24 Not Helpful 4

Question

How old do I have to be to get a Saturday job?



Community Answer

It varies from company to company and state to state. Some places take 14 year old applicants, but others won't accept you until you are 16.

Helpful 19 Not Helpful 3

Question

What if the manager at the job is only mean to me, what should I do?



Community Answer

Start applying for different jobs. Once you've found one, leave your current job for one in which you can be treated with respect. You could try talking to HR about the issue or talking to your manager's supervisor, but that could make things awkward between you and your manager.

Helpful 17 Not Helpful 8

Question

Can a junior high student have a job?



Community Answer

For youth under 16, there are certain restrictions for how long and how often you can work per week. Some companies may not hire junior high students. You can, however, always do jobs around your neighborhood like babysitting or yard work.

Helpful 12 Not Helpful 2

Question

When is a cover letter necessary?



Community Answer

Cover letters are necessary for most job applications. When in doubt, send a cover letter alongside your resume.

Helpful 12 Not Helpful 3

Question

What is the best way to get a job without work experience?



AbigailAbernathy
Top Answerer

You are starting at 0, which means you must try for minimum wage jobs in retail, hospitality, fast food, etc. It's not glamorous, but you are starting at 0 and need to get experience to move up in the work world. No one wants to work these jobs, but you gotta do what you gotta do, and employers love customer service experience.

Helpful 6 Not Helpful 2

Question

Would I still be able to get a job even if I'm an introvert, and am terrible at writing over the smallest things?



Community Answer

Yes! Plenty of introverts find jobs that they enjoy. Whether you're introverted or extroverted, you can find a good job.

Helpful 12 Not Helpful 6

[See more answers](#)



Tips

- Budget your money to avoid over-spending and to save money for after high school.
- When it comes to work or your high school education, always put education first.
- If you have little leadership experience, volunteer. Community service can give you desirable skills and work experience, and you might find it a fulfilling opportunity.^[25]
- Eat breakfast the day of your interview, and get plenty of sleep the night before. You will do your best if you are well-rested.
- Be confident and friendly in your resume and your job interview. Greet your interviewer with a smile, and make eye contact with them during the appointment. Don't be afraid to highlight what you can bring to the company.
- Asking anyone before you use them as a reference is important, regardless of whether or not you know they'll give a good review about you. This is so that they're prepared if they get a phone call from your potential employer asking about you.

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Arda Ozdemir, MA**. Arda Ozdemir is the Executive Coach and Founder of Rise 2 Realize, a nonprofit organization in Palo Alto, California that is dedicated to providing a practical roadmap toward one's full potential in their life and career. Arda is a Reiki Master, an Emotional Freedom Technique Practitioner, and a certified HeartMath Trainer and Mentor. This article has been viewed 273,627 times.

★★★★☆
 11 votes - 74%

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