

# Getting a Job 101

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Are you new to the job search and application process? Not sure what to do or what to expect when applying for your first jobs? Here's some basic information.

## 1. Searching for a Job

The largest employers of persons under 18 years old are retail stores, fast food restaurants, traditional restaurants, and summer contractors (they look for people to assist with short-term projects, like landscaping, painting, or event set-up). Here are a few different ways to look for jobs:

- **“Now Hiring” Signs.** When a company posts these, they are usually looking to hire people quickly. Ask a staff member about the sign and, if you are interested, how to apply. Sometimes they'll have a paper application for you to fill out, but more often, they'll tell you to apply on their website.
- **Company Websites.** Often times you will need to go onto a company's website to see if they're currently hiring. This is especially true of large chain stores and restaurants.

Do a Google search for the **name of the company** plus the word “**jobs**.” For example, “GameStop jobs” or “Forever21 jobs.” Usually, one of the results will say “Jobs,” “Employment,” or “Careers.” Click on this link and follow the instructions to search for jobs (sometimes this requires multiple steps). If this doesn't work, go the company's website and search for a link that says “Jobs,” “Employment,” or “Careers.” Usually, it will be at the top or very bottom of the page.

NOTE: If the website lists a “Corporate Jobs” or “Professional Careers” option, do NOT click it. Those are jobs for persons 18 years and older who have a college degree and professional work experience. You are looking for an option that says something like “In Store Jobs.”

- **Job Search Websites.** There are also websites specifically made for job seekers, which list different job openings across the city or state. Here are a few popular job search websites:
  - o Milwaukeejobs.com (for a large variety of positions. Keep this website in mind when you graduate from high school, as it will be particularly useful)
  - o Jobsthatserve.com (for nonprofit jobs and volunteer opportunities)
  - o Milwaukee.Craigslist.org (for short-term and seasonal jobs. Particularly useful for those under 18 years old)

If you find a job that interests you on one of these websites, follow the application instructions. All job listings will have instructions on how to apply, or there will be a button that says “Apply” somewhere on the page.

- **The Newspaper.** Surprisingly, the “Classified” section of the newspaper is an especially great place for teens to look for summer and part-time work. Usually, for these jobs, the application process is very simple. Follow the directions in the ad regarding how to apply.

## 2. Applying for a Job

Most of the applications you will be filling out will be online; however, some smaller retail stores and fast food restaurants have paper applications. You will need to fill out the same kind of information for both. For the vast majority of jobs you will be applying for, you will not need a resume or cover letter (although these are good things to start learning for when you graduate).

Applications will typically require the following information:

- **Basic information about yourself**, such as your name, address, birthday, phone number, and email address. Most applications will ask for your Social Security Number (SSN). Ask your parents for this if you do not already know it.  
There will be a section in the application that asks, "Are you legally authorized/permitted to work in the United States?" If you are a U.S. citizen (you were born here or passed a citizenship test), mark "Yes." If you are not a U.S. citizen but have work authorization, also mark "Yes." There may be a follow-up question where you can enter more information about this (such as your work authorization number)
- **The position you are applying for and desired "salary or wage."** If you don't care what position you get and are willing to take whatever is available, write "Any."  
"Desired salary or wage" means, how much money do you want to make? Wisconsin's minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour and most 16-18 year olds make between \$7.25 and \$8.50 an hour. Unless the job description clearly says the job pays more than \$8.50/hr, you would be best to ask between that range.
- **Where you go to school and how many years of school you have completed.** It will ask if you have graduated and what your "Major/Minor" or "Major course of study" was. You can leave this blank, as it only applies to colleges
- **Your work history.** You will need to include where you worked, what your position was, the dates when you worked there, what your job duties were, who your supervisor was, and a phone number to reach your supervisor. Fill this out as best as you can. Under "Reason for leaving," don't say anything bad about the place you worked, your boss, or your coworkers. If you didn't like working there, say something like "wanted new learning opportunities."  
If you are still currently employed, under "Dates worked" write "present." It is also okay for you to mark "Don't contact this employer" if you are still currently employed (you may not want your boss to know you're looking for a new job)
- **2-3 References.** You will need their full names and phone numbers, so make sure to have this information written in your phone or a notebook so you're ready. Some applications require an email and mailing address, as well, so be ready. Do NOT list family members or friends as references, unless you worked for them professionally (as a babysitter, for example). Use teachers, librarians, people you have volunteered with, your friend's parents (if they have known you for a long time), etc. are all great. Whoever you list, they **MUST** be an adult, and make sure you ask them if it's okay to use them as a reference **BEFORE** you list them.
- **Dates and times that you can work.** On paper applications there will often be a blank schedule for you to fill out. Sometimes they will want you to actually write in the hours you are willing to work (for example, 3:00-7:00pm); other times they will ask you if you can work mornings, afternoons, evenings, or weekends or what shifts you are willing to work: 1<sup>st</sup> (morning to mid-afternoon), 2<sup>nd</sup> (mid-afternoon to evening) or 3<sup>rd</sup> (overnight). Note that as a minor, you are not allowed to work overnight (3<sup>rd</sup> shift)

If you make a mistake on a paper application, use white out or use a thick black sharpie to neatly cross out your mistake. Online applications often require additional information. Some will ask you a series of multiple choice questions about how you handle certain situations and some will ask you to write in an answer. Most online applications will require you to create an account and will allow you to save your application so you can come back to it later.

## **MAKE SURE TO DOUBLE CHECK SPELLING AND GRAMMAR!**

### **3. After You Submit Your Application – Waiting**

Give the employer some time to look over your application. Don't fret if you don't hear back from them right away – some companies take a long time to review applications.

If you haven't heard back about your application after 2 weeks, it is entirely acceptable for you to call the company and ask about your application. If you submitted an application in person, call the store directly and ask to speak with the Manager. Tell them, **"I recently applied for the \_\_\_\_\_ position and am just following up on the status of my application."** This is a professional way to ask, "Have you looked at my application yet and what did you think?" Whatever their response, thank them for their time before hanging up.

### **4. Their response – Invitation to an Interview**

If an employer is interested in you, they will ask you into the store for an interview or will ask you to do an interview over the phone. Make sure you take down notes about where, when, and with whom you will interview. Department stores can be very large, and so can grocery stores, so make sure you know where to go once you're inside (ask them this information over the phone or in an email). You are also allowed to ask them how long they think the interview will take.

For the interview, you will typically meet for about 20-30 minutes with one person, usually the Manager or Assistant Manager. Look at the **"Preparing for an Interview"** handout inside your packet for questions that are usually asked at interviews.

Sometimes, stores do group interviews. This is when multiple people who applied for a job sit together in a room and are asked questions at the same time. Stores that need to hire a large amount of employees in a short period of time (usually for summer or the Christmas season) are more likely to do this kind of interview than smaller stores. These interviews can take up to 45 minutes and can seem a bit scary, but don't worry! Most of the questions they'll ask the group are situational (for example, "Tell me about a time when you helped a friend" or "What would you do if a customer was yelling at you?") Look at the backside of your **"Preparing for an Interview"** handout for more examples), and they're mostly just looking at your personality. They want to see if you're being nice to the other people in the room or if you're being nasty to them, if you slouch like you're on a couch or if you sit properly, if you respond with an angry tone or positive one, if you seem open to learning or hate being told what to do... those sorts of things. So put on a smile and be positive, and you'll have a very good chance at being hired!

While it's not common, it is possible that you will be asked back for a second interview. This is usually because another Manager wants to meet and interview you before they hire you. This is a good thing – it means they liked you. Just do what you did the first time and the job will be as good as yours.

It is possible that you may not get called for an interview. Some places will send a rejection letter in the mail or to your email address, but some employers may never get back to you at all. You may be left hanging, wondering if they liked your application or not. This is upsetting, but just keep trying. You will eventually find the job for you.

## 5. After the Interview – Waiting

For general retail, fast food, restaurant, and seasonal jobs, it is not necessary for you to send a thank you letter after an interview. If you are applying for a more competitive job or program (for example, an internship with a company), a thank you letter may be helpful. For instructions on how to write a thank you letter, see the flyer in your folder

Most companies will let you know if you got the job or not within 2 weeks after an interview. If you don't hear back from a company by then, you can call or email them and say, **"I just wanted to follow up with you regarding the \_\_\_\_\_ position and see where you were in the hiring process."** Remember to thank them for their time, no matter what their response is.

## 6. First Few Months in the Job – Training and Probation

For any job, you will always go through a few days (or sometimes weeks) of training before you actually start working. You will likely spend the first day or two in a back office away from customers, learning about company rules and expectations. Many companies will even have you practice your job on machines specifically designed for training, like a fake cash register. Once your supervisor feels you are ready, you will move out where the customers are.

Don't worry – you're not on your own yet. You will shadow an experienced staff member for a while and then work with them next to you, ready to help if you have any questions. You will make many mistakes and this is okay – employers don't expect you to learn everything right away. Ask as many questions as you need and take your time. When you feel ready, you can start working on your own.

All jobs have a **"Probationary Period."** This is a trial period after you get hired – usually between 30 and 90 days long. This is the time period when an employer decides if they want to keep you or not. If you want to keep your job, you must be on your best behavior during this time; and time off is extremely limited. If you ask for days off, your request may not be approved by your supervisor. Calling in sick during this time is also frowned upon, but how strict the employer is about this rule varies from employer to employer. If you miss work for whatever reason during your probationary period, you will be expected to make up the time.

After the probationary period is over, your boss will sit down with you to talk about how well (or poorly) you've been doing. They will tell you at this time if they are keeping you on permanently or if they are letting you go.

If they let you go, you are **not** considered "fired," because this was a trial period; so you do not need to tell other employers that you were fired from that job. Also keep in mind that if you did extremely poorly during your probationary period, they can let you before the period is over. Again,

you are not considered "fired" if this happens unless you did something illegal or intentionally broke a company policy.

If you passed probation and have been kept on permanently, congratulations! We hope you enjoy your new job. ☺