

## Network to Work Meeting

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### RESOURCE DOCUMENT

## Applying & Searching for Jobs Online – What You Should Know

### A. Signs of a Scam Online Job Listing

Here you will find guidance for protecting yourself and your identity when submitting online employment applications:

When you apply online for a job, you are asked to provide sensitive personal information. This makes job seekers good targets for scammers who are looking to steal one's identity. Their scam involves sending out fake job listings, hoping job seekers will think they are legitimate and respond to the posting.

These scams appear in social media and in e-mails sent to you by people you don't know. You'll also find fake jobs posted on legitimate websites, and also on fake versions of job boards and employer websites. If the opportunity seems "too good to be true," it is probably a scam. Pay attention to what your instincts tell you if something feels "off" about the opportunity.

Here are nine signs that a job listing is a scam. Before you apply for a job or respond to an email with a copy of your resume, make sure the opportunity doesn't match these criteria. ***If you see any of these signs, don't apply!***

**It's a scam if:**

1. **"No experience is necessary!"**

The description might seem vague, so simple that anyone could do it, or make no sense. No particular skills, experience, or education are required: everyone qualifies. It may use poor grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

2. **The job is very easy to do, and pays very well.**

They will insist you start as soon as possible, and that you will receive a very good salary, but also indicate that little time and effort are needed to do the job.

3. **A genuine job interview is not required.**

They might ask for a quick interview via text message, email, or an app like Slack – or claim to be so impressed with you that they don't need to talk with you about the job. (This also keeps you from asking any troublesome questions.)

4. **They claim to have found your resume on a job board you haven't used in years – or at all.**

This scam usually arrives through email or social media, pitched as a follow-up for your application and claiming they are ready to hire you immediately.

5. **The identity of the employer, the recruiter, or both is not clear.**

The description may look real, but there is no clear indication of the employer's identity – or the employer is well-known (like Amazon), but the only contact is an email address through a service like Gmail, rather than an address associated with a business. Before you apply, be sure to ask for and verify the name of the contact person and the employer.

6. **When you check out the employer online, you only find job postings or warnings.**

A legitimate business does more than hire: It serves people and seeks potential clients, using a website that shows up in a Google search. An "invisible" website, or no website, is a sign of a scam. (And if you find warnings from others, pay attention.)

7. **They urgently need to hire you – IMMEDIATELY!**

They know that you are exactly the employee they need (without talking to you or anyone who knows you), and you must begin working for them as soon as possible – preferably today.

8. **You must provide very sensitive information before anything else is done.**

Before the interview, or before you've finished your research about them, they need your social security number, bank account number, or other financial information in order to pay you. Be particularly cautious if they want to know your birthday (even only the month and day), your mother's maiden name, the first school you attended, or other very personal information.

9. **You must purchase something from them to get started.**

They want to hire you immediately, but first you must pay them for something: job supplies, special training, or anything else that only they can provide.

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## **B. Preparing to Complete an Online Job Application**

**Here you will find guidance and strategies for gathering information and preparing application answers in advance. This will allow you to be efficient and effective in completing applications.**

### **First - Get Ready to Apply:**

Online job applications will ask for a lot of information. You can make this process much easier for yourself by following these pointers.

- **Think like the Employer:** As you consider what to write in your application, think like the employer. The employer wants to hire the right person, who has the skills the employer needs. Unrelated skills and other information won't help you or give you any advantage.
- **Know what you want:** Be sure you are clear on what you are looking for in a new job. Consider these questions:
  - Full time or part time?
  - What kind of job will make me happy?
  - Do I want to keep using skills from my previous jobs?
  - Do I want to start a new career that requires new skills?
- **Create a good resume:** Take advantage of resources available to help you write your resume.
- **Create a few good cover letters:** Use these to show off **who you are**. Don't regurgitate your resume. A good cover letter can be easily modified to become customized for a particular job.
- **Develop your list of professional references:** Who are your professional (not friends or family) contacts who can speak about your skills and work ethic? Are they willing to be a reference? Be sure to ask and let them know in advance if they may be called for a particular job.
- **Carefully read the entire Job Description / Posting:** Before applying, make sure this is the right job for you. Consider the required skills and physical abilities, the hours, the transportation needed to get there, any required licenses, certifications or educational background, and the company culture.
- **Spell out your Work History:** Make a detailed list of all the employers you have had in the past 15 years. Include the correct company name; its location; the name, title and contact number for your supervisors; your job titles; the tasks you did; the dates you worked each position; and the skills you used. *(See below for more on this topic.)*
- **Make a list of any current licenses and certifications you have:** These should be related to the job you are applying for.
- **Create a job search account on each site you plan to use:** Often you can use your email address as your user name. Think about strong and precise passwords you can use. Make a list of the user name and password you have created for each site. Be prepared to provide an answer to security questions that may be used to confirm your identity, such as your pet's name, the city of your first school, and the first car you owned. Don't provide information such as your mother's maiden name, or the street you grew up on, as these are things that can be used to put together your identity profile.

- **Upload your resume to the job search website:** Make sure its font and formatting make it easy to be read by the computer software. Ensure all information is correct. Upload your resume from your computer or from a thumb drive; do NOT copy it from an email.

## **Second – Gather information about your Work History:**

The majority of the information you will enter into an online application is your work history. Some applications require a great deal of detail; others, less so. This can take a lot of time to assemble, so you will want to give yourself plenty of time to do this. Don't rely on your memory.

The work history information you will need includes:

- **Each employer's name, address, and phone number.**
  - Use the legal name of the employer.
  - If the company has closed, enter the company's name, followed by "closed". For example "*ABC Company – Closed*".
  - Use the street address of your specific work location. If you don't know it, you can find it on the Internet. Even if the company is closed, you should still list the address.
  - Use the main phone number for the company; this can be found on the internet.
    - **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If the company is closed, you still have to enter a phone number to make the application software happy. So, enter the area code and then 555-5555. (For example – 802-555-5555).
- **The dates you worked at each employer (starting and ending).**
  - It's best if you use actual dates. The company's Human Resource department can provide that information.
  - Your past tax returns are also a helpful record of your job history.
  - If you can't remember the exact month, make your best guess. Think about the season when you began or ended your employment.
- **Each job title, and the job duties for each job.**
  - Use the official name of the position.
  - Your current or past resumes can provide a good list of things you did.
- **The full names of your supervisors and contact information for each.**
  - The company or a past co-worker may be able to help with this information.
  - LinkedIn, Facebook, or the company's website may also be a good resource for getting this information.
  - Use their official title.
  - Provide their office / desk phone number, NOT their personal cell phone number.
  - Provide only a work email, NOT a personal email.

- If your supervisor no longer works at a particular company, you should provide their name anyway. Don't put the name of the current supervisor, as that person likely doesn't know you or your work.
- **Your salary history.** Employers often want to know what you earned in the past to see if you should get a job at the wage they are offering. There are, however, limits on an employer's ability to ask for this information:
  - Vermont and Connecticut ban any questions about salary history.
  - Maine and New York laws say an employer can't ask this question until a job offer is made.
  - Pennsylvania allows salary history questions except by state government agencies.

Nonetheless some companies still ask the question. It may be because they haven't updated their application. In other cases, they may be a national company that has offices outside your state.

- **Why you left each position.** You will want to be prepared to explain this in the most positive way possible without lying.
  - **Positive reasons include:** a) left or resigned for a new position that was starting within a month; b) retired; c) changed careers or returned to school.
  - **Neutral reasons include:** a) temporary health issue (that has since been resolved); b) the company went out of business; c) starting a family; or d) the company reorganized and your position was cut. Being laid off is a neutral reason for leaving a position, but if you list that too often, a potential employer may be concerned.
  - **Negative reasons include:** a) being fired; b) quitting; c) resigning without starting a new job within a month; d) personal reasons; e) didn't get along well with your boss or others; f) problems with transportation; g) unhappy with your schedule; h) incarceration.

When you have left a job for a negative reason, you need to be prepared in advance to explain it. Provide just the basics without being misleading or lying. Where possible, put a positive spin, explaining what you learned from the situation. *(More below.)*

### Third – Anticipate Application Questions and Prepare Answers:

You have gathered all of your information related to your work history. Now it is time to tackle the particulars of the online application. Here are some important things to know:

- Be aware that all applications are different.
- If a field in an application has an asterisk (\*), this means you must complete that field.

- Pay attention to the instructions about formatting dates. Sometimes there will be a calendar icon for you to click on and then select your desired dates.
- Each page or section of an application has a “Next” button at the end which must be selected to move forward. If you are unable to move forward, look for the problem. It is usually a required field that is empty or date or other number that hasn’t been entered in the proper format. These problems are usually highlighted in red.
- Before clicking on “Next”, carefully review all of your answers.
- Often you can save your partially completed application to finish later. It’s a good idea to regularly save the application while completing it – if possible – so you don’t lose your work.
- **Follow these best practices when entering your contact information:**
  - Use your legal name, because an application is considered a legal document.
  - Use an address where you can receive mail.
  - Use a professional email address that you can and will check regularly.
  - Only include one phone number, and be sure it has an answering machine where you can record a professional message.
  - Often you can upload your resume and the application software will import your contact information from your resume. Therefore, make sure it is correct.
- **Think about how you will answer these common application questions:**
  - *“Are you authorized to work for any employer in the United States?”*
  - *“Do you now or in the future require immigration sponsorship?”*
  - *“Are you willing to relocate?”*
  - *“How did you learn about the job?”*
  - *“Do you know anyone that currently works here?”*
  - *“Do you have access to a vehicle for work purposes?”*
  - *“What percentage of the time are you willing to travel?”*
  - *“Have you applied here previously? If so, when?”*
  - *“What hours are you available to work?”*
    - Be as flexible as possible, as employers may be looking to fill various shift positions.
    - Sometimes there is a drop down menu that gives you options for choosing hours.
    - Be realistic considering limitations such as the availability of public transportation.
    - Don’t rely on ride sharing apps like Uber and Lyft to be your regular transportation because that could be very expensive.
  - *“When will you be available to start?”*
  - *“What are your skills (related to the job)?”*
    - You don’t want to list every skill from your resume.
    - Look at the job description and identify the skills they need. If you have those skills, be sure to use the same words (keywords) that you see in the posting.

- **Have you ever been terminated / fired? Here's how to address it.**
  - Be very brief, and don't try to defend yourself or blame others.
  - If you leave this off of an application, and it is discovered after you are hired, you could be fired for lying on your job application.
- **Here's how to address a criminal background:**
  - Don't lie. Lying on an application could result in being fired.
  - Be sure you know the actual crime that you were convicted of, and whether it was a misdemeanor or felony. Some applications only ask for felonies. Don't list the penal code (crime number).
  - You don't need to list traffic tickets.
  - Briefly explain what happened and how you have changed. Don't go into details, and don't brag. Focus on the change. Here's an example:

*“Ten years ago, I was convicted of driving while under the influence of alcohol. I went to prison for this offense. Since my release, I have turned my life around. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you in more detail at an interview.”*

- **Here's how to address your education:**
  - You don't need to list your high school or GED unless it is asked for. Don't list your graduation year.
  - If you have completed a college program:
    - List the actual degree
    - Put the most recent degree first.
    - Don't put the date you received the degree unless it was within the last 3 years.
  - If you haven't completed your college program:
    - List the college name and degree pursued, calling yourself a degree **candidate**.  
For example:

Syracuse University  
Bachelor of Science in Accounting Candidate  
90 credits completed

Be sure to list the number of credits. Don't list the courses you have taken.
- **Here's how to present your licenses and certificates:**
  - A License is issued by a State and shows training in a specific skill.
    - Only say you are licensed if your license is current.
  - A certificate is something you receive upon completing a training.
    - List only those certificates that will be valuable to the employer.
    - List certificates such as ServSafe; OSHA Certification, Microsoft Office Specialist.
    - Don't list certificates for things such as attendance or employee of the month.
  - Add these to the education section of your application or resume.

- **How should you present your desired salary?**
    - The fields only allow you to enter a number. You can't say "Open" or "Negotiable".
    - Do some research and you may find out what the company pays for that position. Try Salary.com; Glassdoor.com; or Indeed.com.
    - Be realistic; don't choose a figure that is too high or low.
  - **Equal Opportunity Questions**
    - The application may have questions about your gender, race, ethnicity, veteran's status, or disability.
      - Your answers won't be shared with the employer but rather with the U.S. Department of Labor. The goal is to prevent discrimination.
    - You may be required to answer the questions, but there may also be an option to not reveal your information.
  - **Some applications will include assessments to complete.** These can have various purposes:
    - Capability tests look at skills that may be needed for the position, such as computer skills, math skills and problem solving abilities.
    - Work Ethics tests try to determine if you are ambitious, reliable and trustworthy.
    - Emotional Intelligence tests seek to determine how you respond to situations and if you understand situational clues.
  - **Longer answer questions:** Prepare your answers in advance so you have time to think them through. You could type them in a Microsoft Word document and then copy and paste the answers into the application. Take your time, and be sure you have truly answered the question, but you don't need to write extremely long answers. Reading your answer out loud is a good way to determine if your answer makes sense. Here are common questions:
    - *"Why would you like to work with our company?"*
    - *"Why did you apply for this position?"*
    - *"What are your greatest achievements?"*
    - *"What have you learned from previous work experiences?"*
    - *"Give an example of a time you resolved conflict in your team."*
    - *"Why are you the best candidate for the job?"*
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## C. The Best Websites for Searching for Jobs

**When you begin searching online for jobs, you can go to multiple sources. There are job search websites, and then there are the individual company websites.**

- **Job Search websites** (such as Indeed.com; Monster.com, etc.). The advantage of using a job search website is that you can look at many types of jobs in many fields. The jobs are updated daily, and you can customize your search. The “One Click Apply” buttons in the job postings allow you to quickly apply for many jobs.

There are disadvantages to these sites as well. They contain an overwhelming number of jobs that are updated daily, which requires that you have to search frequently so that you don’t miss any jobs. Furthermore, they may not show all of the jobs available at the company.

- **Company Websites.** The advantage of searching for jobs directly on the website of a company that interests you is that you will easily see all open positions, even older postings. You may also see different jobs that you may not have considered. Also, some jobs may never have been posted on the job search websites. The disadvantage of searching on a company website is that it takes more effort to search there, and it may not have the jobs you want.

Currently the top 5 online job search websites are:

1. Indeed.com
2. Monster.com
3. Glassdoor.com (great because it shows reviews of employers)
4. CareerBuilder.com
5. SimplyHired.com

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