



The Job Loss Survival Guide

Guidelines for dealing with job loss, creating an effective resume, increasing your chances for a successful interview, and finding the job you want

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Table of Contents

Introduction	
Determining Where You Are and What You Need to Do	1
During Unemployment: How to Thrive...Not Just Survive	2
Self-Assessment: What Kind of Job Do You Want?	3
The Tool for Getting the Interview: Your Resume	9
Cover Letter Pointers	13
Effective Job Search Strategies	14
The Proposal Letter	15
Job Search Strategies Checklist	16
Increase Your Chances for a Successful Interview	17
Sample Interview Questions	19
How to Negotiate Salary	22
Fairfax County Resources	23
Bibliography	26

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For many of us, job loss may be one of the most challenging and stressful events in our lives. We frequently define ourselves by our jobs. Our work not only provides our income but gives structure to our days as well as a meaningful way to use our time. Our work can also provide a social context for our lives and on-going contact with a variety of individuals and situations. Loss of a job can mean the loss of these satisfiers in our lives. Remember, our job may define what we do but it is not who we are.

This Guide has been prepared by the **Fairfax County Office For Women** to give both women and men a framework for moving through job loss and finding a new position as quickly as possible. Out placement experts tell us, however, that there seems to be a direct correlation between the amount of time, energy, and activity that job seekers put into their search and their finding a new job.

If you have immediate financial needs, consider some of these options to tide you over.

- Apply for unemployment insurance.
- Do temporary or part-time work.
- Consider using your skills and experience to do consulting, perhaps with your former company.
- Take a position for a while, even if it's less than your ideal.
- Put together a "composite job" composed of part-time work at several businesses or incorporating a variety of components such as temping and consulting.
- Talk with local social service agencies about help with financial assistance, house payments, and food.

Do whatever you need to do to provide income but save some time and energy to deal with your job loss and to conduct your job search.

This guide is designed to help you:

- determine where you are and where you want to go.
- recognize and work through your feelings about job loss.
- assess your skills, abilities, and preferences and determine where you can use them.
- use a variety of job search strategies and review interviewing techniques.
- negotiate the salary for your new job.
- locate other community resources.

Many of us in a job loss situation would like to join author Richard Bolles in saying, "Fairy Godmother, where are you when I need you?" Unfortunately, there are no fairy godmothers currently available. ***It is up to you to find a new job.*** The **Office For Women** staff hopes that this guide will be helpful to you and that your job loss will be not only a challenge but also an opportunity to move yourself into even more satisfying and fulfilling work.

Please call us at **703-324-5730** Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. if you have questions or if you need help locating additional resources. The TTY number for the hearing impaired is 703- 222-3504.

The Staff of the Office For Women

Determining Where You Are And What You Need To Do

Have you:

Checked on company severance policy and benefits?

Check with your company's Human Resource or Personnel Office to find out its policy on severance pay and how long your medical benefits can be continued. Find out what happens to your other benefits such as pension fund, life insurance, savings plan, stock options, unused vacation time, etc.

Clarified the reasons you are being laid-off/leaving?

Be clear about the reason/s you are leaving or being laid-off. Discuss with your manager what he/she will say and what type of reference you can expect. Can you negotiate on what will be said? Will it be written or oral?

Filed for unemployment insurance?

Contact the Virginia Employment Commission to file for unemployment insurance. See page 25 for unemployment insurance office locations.

Taken care of financial obligations/payments?

Contact your creditors and let them know you are unemployed. See if they are willing to reduce your monthly payments until you are employed again. If creditors are not cooperative, contact the Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS). They may be able to negotiate payments on your behalf and help you set up a budget. See page 24 for CCCS information.

Identified resources that help you manage job loss and conduct job search?

Read through the Job Loss Survival Guide and/or attend workshops that will help you handle the job loss and prepare for your job search. The Fairfax County Office For Women has resources to assist you with your job loss.

Prepared your resume?

Develop or update your resume to highlight your skills and accomplishments. See pages 9-10 on how to write a successful resume.

Planned your job search?

Develop creative job search strategies that will be especially helpful in today's tough job market. See pages 14-16 for more information on how to do this.

Prepared for interviews?

Practice your interviewing skills. Anticipate and prepare for any questions that may be difficult for you. See pages 17-21 for information on what you can expect in an interview.

Located supportive groups and services?

If you're confused about your next career move or what jobs to look for, consider working with a counselor. Attend employment support and networking groups.

Don't get discouraged. You will find another job.

During Unemployment: How to Thrive...Not Just Survive

After devoting much time and energy to a job, it is hard to see it eliminated. There is a tendency to feel that all past efforts were wasted. Some people believe what they were doing was unimportant to the company decision-makers. As a result, many laid-off employees suffer a loss of self-respect. They begin to believe that they have no skills at all and that no other employer could appreciate them. Worse yet, being cut off from the friends they had at work may cause them to feel lonely and isolated.

Anger follows disbelief and denial as the unfairness of the situation takes hold. Other reactions that people frequently feel as they go through job loss are a sense of anxiety or depression. A later stage in the loss process is acceptance of the situation and integrating the loss into your life. Everyone's reactions to loss differ and your feelings may appear in a different order or even be re-visited as you move through job loss.

Successful job seekers learn to accept that life simply isn't fair at times. They focus their energy on making a plan and finding ways to keep their self-esteem intact instead of dwelling on the past. Letting go of bitterness is critical because anger and discouragement can easily be noticed in an interview.

It may be helpful to understand that most decisions to cut personnel are not based on the quality of work being done. People lose their jobs every day through no fault of their own. In the 1990s, this is well understood by most employers and will not negatively effect your chances of being hired.

Stress

It is helpful to accept job loss as being one of the most stressful events of your life. Financial and family pressures in addition to the sudden change in future plans, together with feelings of rejection, may take more coping skill than needed before becoming unemployed.

Acknowledge signs of anxiety or depression.

Consider the ways to reduce unemployment related stress. If you are having difficulty in dealing with your emotions, think about getting professional help. Several sources for low cost counseling are listed in the resource section of this guide. The job of finding a job requires surrounding oneself with people that can be supportive. The best support may come from others who have experienced job loss. Many groups exist for this purpose. Inquire at churches, synagogues, and professional and trade associations related to your field for job seekers support groups and services.

Signs of Anxiety or Depression

- irritability
- frequent crying
- aches and pains
- panic
- low energy
- diminished sex drive
- change in sleeping/eating patterns
- withdrawal from friends and family
- difficulty concentrating

Self Assessment: What Kind of Job Do You Want?

Ideas to Consider For Reducing Unemployment Related Stress:

1. Develop a daily schedule including a wake-up time. Spend at least six hours a day on your search.
2. Stay active. Exercise, set up meetings outside the house, and continue to enjoy your hobbies.
3. Have family meetings to discuss everyone's feelings and ideas. Update others on progress made and tell them how they can assist you. Don't attempt to protect family members from the problems by withdrawing. Everyone's anxiety will decrease by talking.
4. Stay away from the television during the day. It zaps your energy.
5. Eat well. Don't overdose on sugar or alcohol. Both of these things make depression worse.
6. Practice interviewing with another person.
7. Become aware of negative self-talk: "I'm too old." "I haven't got enough experience." "Who am I kidding?"
8. Reward and praise yourself for what you do.

This is one of the most important questions you will have to answer. Your career choice influences every part of your life. Choosing a job or career begins with self-assessment. That involves taking a look at your skills and abilities (most importantly, those you enjoy using), your interests, your personality, and your work style. It is important for you to be happy and fulfilled in your work.

Job satisfaction is also important to your employer because you will be more energetic and productive. Take the time to assess your skills and what you enjoy and how they relate to different jobs or career fields. Your enthusiasm for jobs you like will come across in your interview and will motivate your job search.

Identifying your skills, preferences, and achievements will help you:

1. increase your confidence and self esteem through understanding who you are and what abilities you have.
2. prepare your resume to emphasize what you can do for a company.
3. identify jobs and companies which need employees with your background.
4. "sell" yourself in an interview by talking confidently about your accomplishments and abilities.

See the following pages for an exercise in self-assessment.

List your past employment beginning with your most recent job. Next, identify what you liked the most about that job (job satisfier) and what you liked least.

My Past Employment	What I liked Most (Job Satisfiers)	What I liked least
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Of those items you entered in the LIKED MOST column, put them in rank order beginning with the item you liked the most as #1, then #2, and so on.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

The Richard Bolles Functional Skills List (Quick Inventory)

Read through the functional skills list below and place a check mark beside those skills you consider your best or top skills AND enjoy using. Next, go back through the list and pick your top 10 to 15 skills. (This list of skills or action words can also be used when you are ready to write your resume.)

achieved	drew	lectured	reconciled	traveled
acted	drove	led	recommended	trouble-shot
adapted	dug	learned	recorded	tutored
addressed	edited	lifted	recruited	typed
administered	eliminated	listened	reduced	umpired
advised	empathized	logged	referred	understood
analyzed	enforced	made	rehabilitated	undertook
anticipated	established	maintained	related	unified
arbitrated	estimated	managed	remembered	united
ascertained	evaluated	manipulated	rendered	upgraded
assembled	examined	mediated	repaired	used
assessed	explained	memorized	reported	washed
attained	expanded	mentored	represented	weighed
audited	experimented	met	researched	worked
arranged	expressed	modeled	resolved	wrote
budgeted	extracted	monitored	responded	wrought
built	filed	motivated	restored	verbalized
calculated	financed	navigated	retrieved	
charted	fixed	negotiated	reviewed	
checked	followed	observed	risked	
classified	formulated	obtained	sang	_____
coached	founded	offered	scheduled	Courtesy of
collected	gathered	operated	selected	Richard N. Bolles
communicated	gave	ordered	sensed	
compiled	generated	organized	separated	National Career
completed	got	originated	served	Development
composed	guided	oversaw	set	Project
computed	had responsibility	painted	set-up	_____
conceptualized	for	perceived	sewed	
conducted	handled	performed	shaped	
consolidated	headed	persuaded	shared	
constructed	helped	photographed	showed	
conserved	hypothesized	piloted	sketched	
controlled	identified	planned	sold	
coordinated	illustrated	played	solved	
copied	imagined	predicted	sorted	
counseled	implemented	prepared	spoke	
created	improved	prescribed	studied	
decided	increased	presented	summarized	
defined	influenced	printed	supervised	
delivered	informed	problem-solved	supplied	
designed	initiated	processed	symbolized	
detailed	innovated	produced	synergized	
detected	inspected	programmed	synthesized	
determined	inspired	projected	systematized	
developed	installed	promoted	talked	
devised	instituted	proofread	taught	
diagnosed	instructed	protected	team-build	
directed	integrated	provided	tended	
discovered	interpreted	publicized	tested and proved	
dispensed	interviewed	purchased	told	
displayed	intuited	questioned	took	
disproved	invented	raised	took instructions	
dissected	inventoried	read	trained	
distributed	investigated	realized	transcribed	
diverted	judged	reasoned	translated	
dramatized	kept	received	treated	

1.

2.

3.

I could combine _____ and _____
(skill) (job satisfier)

in these job possibilities:

1.

2.

3.

I could combine _____ and _____
(skill) (job satisfier)

in these job possibilities:

1.

—
2.

—
3.

—

Now, list any other job possibilities that you might be considering.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

From your list of job possibilities, select three or four possibilities that are the best match for you right now. You may need to do some research on these jobs, especially if this will be a career change for you. These are your "job targets" and will be used in writing your resume, conducting your job search, and preparing for your interviews.

List your "job target" here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

The Tool for Getting the Interview: Your Resume

The resume is the most common job hunting tool. Its purpose is to get interviews with potential employers.

The two most commonly used formats are:

chronological and **functional**.

The following pages include examples of each.

The Chronological Resume

The chronological format shows work experience and personal history arranged in reverse time sequence. It lists your most recent job first and defines your responsibilities and accomplishments and goes on to list your other jobs. It is advantageous when:

- the name of your last employer is an important consideration.
- you are staying in the same field as your prior job.
- your job history shows real growth and development.
- your prior titles are impressive.
- your work experience is in highly traditional fields such as education and government.

It is **not** advantageous when:

- your work history is spotty.
- changing career goals.
- you have changed employers too frequently.
- you want to de-emphasize age.
- you have been doing the same thing too long.
- you have been absent from the job market for awhile.
- you are looking for your first job.

The Functional Resume

This format emphasizes your work experience and abilities cataloged by major areas of involvement. It also includes a brief work history with dates of employment. (In today's job market, employers state it is especially important to have that information.)

This format is advantageous when:

- you want to emphasize capabilities not used in recent work experience.
- changing careers.
- entering the job market for the first time.
- reentering the job market after an absence.
- you have had a variety of different, relatively unconnected work experience.
- much of your work has been freelance, consulting, or temporary.
- your career growth in the past has not been good.

It is **not** advantageous when:

- you want to emphasize a management growth pattern.
- you have performed a limited number of functions in your work.
- your most recent employers have been highly prestigious.
- your past employment was in highly traditional fields such as teaching, ministerial, political areas.
- the specific employers are a paramount interest.

The Targeted Resume

This format is another type of resume that you might want to consider. It is a highly focused presentation of your abilities and accomplishments and is directed to a very specific job target. It has many of the same advantages and disadvantages as the functional resume.

A targeted resume is advantageous when:

- you are very clear about your job target.
- you have several directions to go and want a different resume for each.
- you want to emphasize capabilities you possess but in which you may not have paid experience.

It is **not** advantageous when:

- you want to use one resume for several applications.
- you are not clear about your capabilities and accomplishments.
- you are just starting your career and have little experience.

Writing Style Format for Resumes, Regardless of Type

No matter what resume format you decide is most appropriate, it is important to follow these basic guidelines.

- Use action verbs in short phrases.

"Reorganized work flow..."

"Conducted training seminars in..."

- List your accomplishments--not just duties. Describe how you did the job.

"Implemented innovative inventory system..."

"Reorganized center for more efficient use of space..."

- Use numbers whenever possible to document your claims.

"Increased output by 20%..."

"Supervised staff of 25..."

- Use the jargon of the field, but not to excess.

"Identified targeted audiences..."

"Increased market-niche by 40%..."

Appearance of the Resume:

Always use 8 ½ x 11" paper.

Use an electric typewriter, word processor, or personal computer.

Be sure your resume is letter-perfect. There should be **NO** spelling or grammatical errors.

Highlight key points by underlining, CAPITALIZATION, s p a c i n g, or **bold-facing**.

Cover Letter Pointers

A cover letter should complement your resume. It should emphasize NOT that you are enclosing a resume, but that the recipient will be very interested in the information in the resume. Whenever possible, address your letter to the person in charge of hiring. A cover letter might include the following:

1st Paragraph

Tell why you are writing. Name the position, field, or general vocational area about which you are asking. Tell how you heard of the opening or organization. Write something that demonstrates your knowledge of the organization. ("I read in the local paper about your expansion, etc.")

2nd Paragraph

Mention one or two qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the employer, slanting your remarks to his/her point of view. Tell why you are particularly interested in his/her company, location, or type of work. If you have had related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out.

3rd Paragraph

Refer the reader to the enclosed application form, resume, or credentials as a way of providing additional information concerning your background and interest.

4th Paragraph

Close by make a specific request for an interview, either suggesting a date and time you would prefer or requesting a time at the reader's convenience. Make sure your closing is not vague; state clearly the specific action you anticipate from the reader.

Give your cover letter a personal touch, but avoid appearing familiar, cute, or humorous. Point out how some aspect of your background or section of your resume relates particularly to that company's concerns, or include some comments that show you are knowledgeable about the company and its business.

Your address

Ms. Betty Lynch
Hubbell Corporation
12000 Francisco Road
Blake, VA 22222

Dear Ms. Lynch:

Ms. Judith Barquin, Director of Communications at ABC Associates, informed me of the position of public relations specialist for the Hubbell Corporation. I would like to be considered for this position. Being a daily reader of Connections, I have always admired the products of the Hubbell Corporation and have followed the development of the new communications project.

My academic and professional experience have prepared me for this position. I have developed publicity campaigns for several organizations, designed and created promotional materials, and acquired strong public speaking skills. Writing, editing, conducting effective meetings, and development of multi-media instructional packages have all been part of my background. I am eager to combine my skills with my ambition to get the job done and contribute toward the continuing success of your corporation.

I appreciate your review of my enclosed resume for the position of public relations specialist for the Hubbell Corporation. I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss with you how I might best meet your needs. I will call your office next week to inquire about an interview.

Sincerely,

Kathi Strickland

Effective Job Search Strategies

Looking for a job is never easy even in the best of times. Studies have found that the more strategies a job hunter uses, the greater the chances of finding leads and opportunities and a job! How many job search strategies are you using? Use the checklist on page 16 to find out.

Remember, over 80% of all available jobs are never advertised in any way and are found simply by knowing someone who is aware of the vacancy. The remaining 20% are usually found in want ads or listed with employment agencies. Generally, these are either highly specialized positions or relatively low-paying jobs in fields that often experience frequent turnover.

One of the most effective strategies to access the "hidden job market" is to begin using your existing network of friends, co-workers, and professional acquaintances for help in expanding your list of contacts. Networking is so effective that we suggest you spend most of your time making personal contacts. Remember, everyone has looked for a job some time in their life and recalls how the experience feels. Your contacts (or network) can help you by introducing you to people in other companies, making a call on your behalf, or referring you to jobs that may be anticipated and not yet advertised. Tell everyone what kind of work you are looking for. Ask your contacts, "Do you know anyone who works in the field of _____, or at Company _____?" Then, call those people. Say, "(your contact's name) suggested you would be a good person to talk to about (area of mutual interest)." Request 20 to 30 minutes of their time for a meeting. (This is often referred to as an "information and referral meeting.")

Your objective is to gain information on organizations and career opportunities in your contact's particular field of interest and make yourself known.

Each of these questions can give you an introduction or lead to a fresh opportunity. The questions have not been placed in any order of importance...that is for you to determine. Ask:

- What is happening in this career field?
- Do you know of any sources I could consult to locate employers who hire people in your occupation?
- What professional (or trade) associations do you recommend joining? Who could I contact locally to learn more?
- Which are the most rapidly growing companies in this area?
- How would you compare their market niche, their product line, or what they would be like to work for?
- Do you know anyone at _____ Company?

Be sure to ask for the name of someone else who they feel might be helpful for you to talk to. This could be someone within their organization or a colleague elsewhere. Ask if you may use their name when you contact that person. Remember to send a thank you note to each person who meets with you.

In today's job market, a proposal letter is a creative approach which is being used with some success. First, decide how you can specifically contribute to an organization. Focus on the benefits that would result from hiring you. Create an opportunity for yourself by submitting a written proposal for a project or a problem solving technique which will help a company.

Don't give all the details. At minimum, request a meeting to discuss the future needs of the organization and your unique qualifications.

Create an interest in what you have to offer. Follow up your letter with a phone call. See the sample letter on page 15 for more details.

The Proposal Letter

The purpose of the proposal letter is to entice a company with a "new idea" that will expand their market and increase their productivity. The idea is a testament to your creativity and potential value to the company that hires you. How you present yourself and your idea in the letter form will also communicate a certain image of you that forms a "first impression." Below is a proposal letter, followed by a brief critique.

Dear Mr. Smith:

Since 1970 I have been successfully involved in turning around, starting up, or improving the advertising, marketing, and sales efforts of numerous companies. As a result of my experiences, I believe that I have developed an excellent sense for business and an exceptional aptitude for innovation and creativity.

YOUR
EXPERIENCE

My involvement in advertising has naturally evolved into a very keen interest in other forms of communications, particularly the cable television industry. Consequently, I have been conducting a self-study program encompassing dozens of articles, reports, and perspectives.

SPECIAL
INTEREST

This study has resulted in the formulation of an idea which I believe would be of great interest to Young and Rebicam. Although this idea is not confined to the cable television industry per se, it appears to have a phenomenal application to the concept of narrowcasting and target marketing.

THE
"CARROT"

Furthermore, it is unique and would require a relatively low investment of money and manpower. Most importantly, if successful, it would open up a whole new market for your firm and generate several million dollars in annual profits.

WHY COMPANY
SHOULD BE
INTERESTED

However, to be successful the project will require the participation of an experienced, full service agency such as Young and Rebicam, and there are still a few issues that need clarification. With this in mind, I would be most interested in reviewing the matter with you in more detail. I will call next week to set up an appointment.

Sincerely,

Ann Camera

Job Search Strategies Checklist

DO YOU...

- Read Sunday Want Ads from beginning to end?
- Read the Business and Finance section to identify new businesses and companies relocating to the area?
- Visit state and private employment agencies?
- Research local companies in directories and telephone books?
- Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job and what kind of job?
- Attend a conference or business meeting to make contacts with people employed in your career field?
- Join and actively participate in a professional association?
- Ask relatives and friends about jobs where they work?
- Walk into personnel departments and fill out applications?
- Talk to potential employers (not personnel staff) in companies that you would like to work?
- Tailor your resume to the job?
- Send typed, individualized cover letters with each resume?
- Follow up job applications with a telephone call?
- Keep a file of all companies contacted, ads responded to, applications, copies of cover letters, and responses?
- Research the company prior to an interview?
- Practice interviewing responses?
- Send a typed thank you letter after an interview?
- Check back with the employer to determine when the hiring decision was made, the outcome, and reasons for non-selection?
- Spend 35 to 40 hours per week job hunting?

Increase Your Chances for a Successful Interview

The key to successful interviewing is preparation. Some people fear that preparation will reduce spontaneity. Nothing could be further from the truth! Careful and thorough preparation will increase your chances for a successful interview.

Your best preparation is practice. Practice out loud your responses to anticipated or obvious interview questions (see pages 19 through 20 for sample questions). Identify your strengths and skills and be prepared to tell the interviewer why you are the best person for the job. Gather information on the company, industry, and the people you will be seeing before the interview. Three sources of information about a company are available: written material, people, and the company itself. The Office For Women library contains many business directories and files on various local employers. Many libraries maintain annual reports from local companies. Professional associations, trade unions, employment offices, and university career centers are often helpful. You can also call the company to request information (brochures, newsletters, or other handouts).

Word-of-mouth is one of the best ways to gather information on a company. Try to talk to several people who work there now or have recently (within the last year) left the company. Remember, the objective of the interview is to determine whether or not there is a match between what the company needs and what you can provide. The better prepared you are, the more confident you are, the more successful you will be.

Usually an interview is broken up into three sections:

1. **The Introduction** The conversation usually (but not always) begins on a casual level.
2. **The Main Section** The conversation moves to questions about your qualifications and experience. The interviewer will give you information about the job. This is the time for you to ask questions about the job responsibilities and requirements.
3. **The Closing** The interviewer will bring the meeting

to a close by letting you know when you can expect to be contacted. If not, ask when they expect to make a decision and say that you will follow-up if you have not heard from them by that date.

Before the Interview

- Know the exact time and place of the interview and arrive a little early.
- If possible, find out who (name, title, role) will be interviewing you or what type of interview it will be. (First in a series, panel, etc.)
- Research the company so that you have something to talk about besides yourself.
- Write out questions you may want to ask.
- Make sure you have several copies of your resume with you, as well as samples of your work if the position requires them.
- Get permission from the references you plan to use. Prepare a typed list of their names, positions, phone numbers, and addresses. Take the list to the interview in case it is requested.
- Appearance should be appropriate for the job.
- Do not eat, chew gum, or smoke.
- Go alone unless you hope to job share with a partner.
- Be prepared for some of the questions you might be asked.

During the Interview

- Introduce yourself and offer a firm handshake.
- Wait for the interviewer to offer you a seat before you sit down.
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer.
- Remember your body language. Avoid tapping your foot or other nervous mannerisms.
- Listen carefully.
- Do not discuss personal problems.
- If questions are asked about marital status, children, etc., you may want to respond that you do not believe your home life will interfere with your ability to do the job.
- Focus on your skills, experience, and positive qualities and how they are relevant to the job. Tell how you can contribute to the company.
- Never say "no" to a question. Rephrase the question and expand an answer.
- In general, do not ask about salary or benefits on the first interview. If you are asked about your salary expectations, try an option to a direct answer such as:
 - Ask the interviewer the usual salary range for this position.
 - Give the range you have discovered through your research and ask how that compares with this company.
- Be open and honest but think carefully about your responses to questions.
- Answer each question completely but know when to stop talking.
- Ask questions about job responsibilities and requirements.
- If you are offered the job and are not sure it is what you want, ask for time to think about it.

- If you are not offered the job at the end of the interview, do not be discouraged. Most interviewers take time to think it over before they offer a job.

After the Interview

- Write down name, title, and location of the interviewer, as well as the expected date the position will be offered.
- Write down the questions that bothered you or that you feel you did not handle well. Work on better responses before your next interview.
- Send a follow-up letter which: thanks the interviewer, reviews important points in your background and things you did not mention in your cover letter, and states your desire to join the organization.
- If your list of references was requested, call the people on your list to alert them. Tell them about the job and why you feel you are qualified.
- If you do not hear within two weeks, call to remind the interviewer that you are still interested in the position and ask about a revised time frame for the decision.
- If a job offer is made, sleep on it. Do not accept it on the spot unless you know you really want it. Ask questions you forgot to ask at the interview that may help you decide.
- In case of rejection, use it as a learning experience. Ask for suggestions to improve your interviewing style. Ask what factors most affected the final decision. Invite the interviewer to share his/her reaction to your qualifications in comparison to other candidates and your ability to present yourself generally.

Sample Interview Questions

The following questions are grouped in areas that are of interest to employers. While no interviewer will ask all of these questions, generally one or two questions will be asked from each category.

General Questions

Tell me about yourself.
How do you spend your spare time?
What are your hobbies?
What books, magazines do you read?
What was your major field of interest in school?

Questions That Demonstrate Motivation

What are you looking for in a job?
Why do you want to work for this company?
If you were starting over again, what field would you choose?
What sports do you enjoy?
What is the most rewarding assignment you have tackled?
What is the most difficult assignment you have ever had?
Why are you changing fields?

Questions on Past Work History or Volunteer Experiences

Why did you leave your former job?
Did you enjoy working for your past employer or supervisor?
Why are you making a change now?
What direct managerial or supervisory experience have you had?
What were your duties or responsibilities in your past job or volunteer experience?
What did you like best/least about your past job or volunteer experience?

Questions That Help an Employer Determine Your Readiness for Work

Why have you been unemployed for so long?
How would your family feel about your working for this company?
How do you plan to get to work?
How do you plan to commute?
What salary are you worth?
How will you handle the time commitment for this job? (Overtime, flexible, night, or weekend work)
What are your short-term/long-term goals?

Questions That Help an Employer Get to Know You

When the pressure is on, how do you typically respond?
Could you give examples illustrating your dependability, reliability, etc.?
How would you describe the ideal boss?
How would you react if you had to fire an employee?

What kinds of things make you angry?
How would you describe your personality?
Would others describe you as a competitive person?
Why did you major in English...in Education...in Psychology?
What are your three greatest accomplishments?
How do your strengths or accomplishments relate to this job?
What is your greatest strength/weakness?

Questions Relating to the Specific Job or Company

How long will you stay with us?
How do you think you will fit in with our organization?
Why is this work of interest to you?
How does your past work history (paid or volunteer) qualify you for this job?
Has it crossed your mind that you may be overqualified for this job?
Will you be happy working as a _____?
What is your ideal work environment?

Sample Questions That You May Ask the Interviewer

Listed below are sample questions that you may want to ask during the interview to supplement your research. Avoid asking questions that begin with "Is," "Are," and "Do." These questions lead to yes/no answers. Begin your questions with "Who," "What," "Where," "Why," "How."

Would you mind describing the duties of the position as you see them?
May I see a job description for this position?
Would you please describe a typical day in this organization?
Could you show me where this position fits into the organization?
How much travel is normally expected?
How frequently do you relocate professional employees?
Why are you looking to fill this position? Is it newly-created? Did the previous employee leave? Why?
How many people have had this position and where have they gone in the organization?
Will you tell me about the prospects for advancement beyond this level?
How does one advance in this organization?
How often are performance reviews given?
How often do the training programs begin?
Would you explain your company's tuition reimbursement program?
Have any new product lines been announced recently?
What is the average age of top management?
Can you describe _____ to me (Chief Executive Office's personality often reveals a lot about a company's philosophy).
How many people are you interviewing for this position?
What are the things you like least/most about working here?
If I am offered a job, how soon would you like me to begin working?
Can I tell you anything more about my qualifications?
When can I expect to hear from you?

The initial interview is not the time to inquire about salary!

Illegal Pre-employment Questions

Questions no employer is legally allowed to ask you unless they are "Bona fide Occupational Qualifications," (BFOQs). Keep these questions in mind during your interview.

SUBJECT	CAN DO OR ASK	CANNOT DO OR ASK
Your sex	Notice your appearance	Make comments or take notes, unless sex is a BFOQ.
Your race/national origin	Notice your appearance	Make comments or ask what your race/national origin is.
Religion		What is your religion? What religious holidays do you observe?
Your marital status	Status AFTER hiring, for insurance purposes	What is your maiden name? Are you married? Single? Divorced? Engaged? Living with anyone? Where does your spouse work?
Children	Numbers and ages of children AFTER hiring for insurance purposes.	Do you have children at home? How old? Who cares for them? Do you plan more children?
Physical data	Explain or show how manual labor, lifting, or other requirements of the job are performed. Require a physical exam.	How tall are you? How much do you weigh?
Age	Age AFTER hiring. Are you between 18 and 70?	How old are you? Estimate age.
Housing	If you have no phone, how can we reach you?	Do you own your home? Do you rent? Do you live in an apartment or house?
Citizenship	Are you a citizen of the U.S.?	What is your native language? Are your parents or spouse naturalized or native-born citizens of the U.S.?

What can you do if you are asked one of these questions?

1. Answer the question with the statement: "I think that is not relevant to the requirements of the position." Or say, "I am not sure how that is relevant to this position. Could you explain?"
2. Contact the nearest Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) office.
3. Answer the question and ignore the fact that it is not legal.

How to Negotiate a Salary

It is often important to negotiate for a higher salary than the first one offered. There are two reasons for this: 1) You may want more money than you are offered; 2) The manager may expect you to and may use your skill in salary negotiating to determine how competent you would be in doing other kinds of negotiations that might be needed in the job. Here are general tips for salary negotiations.

Decide in advance the minimum amount you are willing to take. You might aim for 10 percent more than your current figure. You can try to get more, but be clear in your own mind that you won't settle for less.

Do not talk about salary at all until after you receive a job offer. If the employer asks what salary range you are looking for before making you an offer, respond by asking whether you are a serious contender for the job. If the employer says yes, press to find out how serious a contender you are. (Try to get an offer.) If the employer says no, say it would be premature to talk salary at this point.

If during an interview the employer asks how much you are making now, tell him/her the approximate amount. Do not say anything else at this point unless you have an offer. Then say, "Of course I am looking for something above that amount."

Never mention a potential figure first. (Generally, the first person to say a number loses.) Suppose an employer asks point blank, "How much do you want?" A good response is: "Well, I do not think I am in a position to say what my skills are worth to the organization. I think you need to decide that."

If the employer says the organization absolutely cannot go beyond a certain amount that is too low for you, say, "I am really interested in this job. Who would you have to talk to in the organization to see if that ceiling could be raised?"

If the employer says the salary range for the position is between X and Y, say that with your skills, you would certainly need to be at the upper end of that range.

If the employer names a salary figure first, wait a minute or so before responding. If it is too low, say, "I am very interested in the job and think I would do it very well, but the salary would be a problem." Then wait for the employer to make another offer.

If the employer suggests that good fringe benefits will make up for a salary level that you consider too low, say you would like to settle on the base salary before discussing fringe benefits.

If you really want a job but are unable to negotiate the salary you want, try to get the employer to commit to increasing your salary to the amount you want in 3 months, provided you perform as competently as you expect. Do not settle for a vague promise like, "We will see what we can do," but get the employer to agree to the specific increase you want and put it in writing.

Even if you are offered a job that you want at the salary you want, say you would like to think it over first. Ask if you can call back in a day or two. This will give you a little more time to think about the job and make sure you want it.

Fairfax County Resources

The following organizations can assist you with a variety of services related to job loss. This listing is not an endorsement of any agency nor does it include resources outside of Fairfax County. For similar resources in your jurisdiction consult your local telephone book. Organizations listed here can answer many of your questions and help you with additional needs in your own situation. Some services have eligibility requirements, some are free, and others charge a fee.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT/EMPLOYMENT TRAINING RESOURCES

Fairfax County Office For Women (703) 324-5730

12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 318, Fairfax, VA 22035

Career development information and referral and services for Fairfax County residents and employees.

Some special programs open to the public.

Fairfax County Department of Family Services Self-Sufficiency Unit

Services to VIEW, Food Stamp clients, All County Residents

Fairfax Office 12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22035.. **(703) 324-7500**

Falls Church Office 6245 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22044 **(703) 533-5300**

Reston Office 11484 Washington Plaza West, Reston, VA 22090..... **(703) 787-4900**

IMP Office 8850 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309 **(703) 799-8400**

Education for Independence/Project, Fairfax County Public Schools,

Office of Adult & Community Education

Vocational skills training for single parents and displaced homemakers in the Northern Virginia area.

Centreville Center, 5775 Spindle Court, Centreville, VA **(703) 227-2220**

Pimmit Hills Center, 7510 Lisle Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22043 **(703) 506-2220**

Bryant Center, 2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306 **(703) 660-2065**

The Women's Center **(703) 281-2657**

133 Park Street, N. E., Vienna, VA 22180

Marriage, financial, personal, and career counseling and workshops.

Senior Employment Resources **(703) 750-1936**

4201 John Marr Drive, Suite 236, Annandale, VA 22003

Helps clients 55 years and over find jobs in the private sector.

For residents of Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties, Falls Church and Fairfax Cities.

Fairfax Area Agency on Aging..... **(703) 324-5426**

Senior Community Services Employment Program

12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 708, Fairfax, VA 22035

Paid work experience and job training for persons age 55+ having limited income.

Small Business Development Center, George Mason University (703) 277-7700
4031 University Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030
Training workshops, seminars and business counseling for current and prospective small business owners.

Virginia Career Information Hotline 1-800-542-5870
Information and referral about education, job training, financial aid, apprenticeship programs, and employment outlook. Information on salary ranges for the most widely-held occupations in Virginia.

Northern Virginia Community College, Counseling Centers
Career and academic counseling to students and residents of Virginia.
Credit and non-credit courses available.

Alexandria Campus (703) 845-6301
Annandale Campus (703) 323-3200

United Community Ministries..... (703) 360-9088
7842 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22306
Job counseling, placement and development for low and moderate income Fairfax County residents.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Federally Employed Women (National)..... (202) 898-0994
Private group promoting women's entry into government service.

Fort Belvoir Family Member Employment Assistance Program (703) 805-2605
Army Community Service SMEAP, 9725 Harris Road
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Greater Washington, Inc..... 1-800-747-4222
A non-profit community service providing financial counseling, Reverse Mortgage and Mortgage Default counseling, and a debt management program.

MENTAL HEALTH

Fairfax County Mental Health Centers
Mental health services; fees on a sliding scale basis.

Mt. Vernon (703) 360-6910
Springfield (703) 866-2100
Route 1 (703) 799-0300
Northwest (703) 481-4100
Chantilly (703) 968-4000
Woodburn (703) 573-0523
Braddock Crossing..... (703) 691-1685

Emergency Services (24 hours).....(703) 573-5679

Northern Virginia Family Services (703) 533-9727
100 N. Washington Street, Falls Church, VA 22046
Mental health services; fees on a sliding scale basis.

Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Alcohol and Drug Services
Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board (703) 324-7000
12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 800, Fairfax, VA 22035

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning Information and Referrals. (English) (703) 222-0880
12011 Government Center Parkway (Spanish) (703) 631-3366
Fairfax, VA 22035 (TTY) (703) 803-7914
Referrals to public and private non-profit resources for a variety of human service needs.
Contact point for fuel assistance program.

HEALTH CARE

Fairfax County Department of Health

Falls Church District Office (703) 534-8343
Herndon/Reston District Office (703) 481-4242
Joseph Willard Health Center (Fairfax) (703) 246-7100
Mt. Vernon District Office (703) 660-7100
Springfield District Office (703) 569-1031
South County Health Center (703) 660-9542
Bailey's Health Center (703) 931-3606

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) Offices

Information Line (Recorded menu selections) 1-800-897-5630

- **Fairfax/Chantilly Area**
13135 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway (Route 50), Suite 340
Fairfax, VA 22033
(703) 803-0000 (Job Service); (703) 803-1100 (Unemployment Insurance)
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

- **Alexandria Area**
5520 Cherokee Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22312
(703) 813-1399 (Job Service); (703) 813-1300 (Unemployment Insurance)
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

- **Woodbridge Area**
13370 Minnieville Road
Woodbridge, VA 22192
(703) 897-0407 (Job Service and Unemployment Insurance)

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (except 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday)

Career and Life Planning/General Career Information

What Color is Your Parachute, Richard Bolles
Wishcraft, Barbara Sher
Three Boxes of Life, Richard Bolles
Working Woman Magazine

Resume Writing

The Perfect Resume, Tom Jackson
The Write Stuff, Robbie Kaplan
Sure-Hire Resumes, Robbie Kaplan

Interviewing

Knock `Em Dead, Martin J. Yate
Managing the Interview, Richard Olson
Sweaty Palms: The Art of Interviewing, H. Anthony Medley

Job Search

Guerilla Tactics in the Job Market, Tom Jackson
Business Section, The Washington Post
JOBS, Employment Weekly
Federal Career Opportunities Bulletin, Federal Research Service, Inc.
Washington Business Journal
Washington Information Directory, Congressional Quarterly
Washington Directory, Columbia Books, Inc.
National Trade and Professional Association (NTPA) Directory
Directory of Business and Industry for Fairfax County, Economic Development Authority