

THE COACH

A Practical Guide to Digital Workforce Readiness and Career Success

Plan strategically. Search digitally. Present yourself confidently. Grow continuously.



Riad S. Aisami, Ph.D.

Founder and President
Global Institute for Digital Education

2026

Publication Information

Copyright © 2026 Riad S. Aisami. All rights reserved.

The Coach: A Practical Guide to Digital Workforce Readiness and Career Success

2026 1st edition

A professional training guide of the Global Institute for Digital Education (GIDE).

Author Background

Between 1986 and 2001, Dr. Riad S. Aisami worked as a workforce specialist and consultant. As an independent contractor through his firm, ACTION Tutoring, Job Training, and Development—ACTION meaning Aisami Center for Training, Improvement, and Occupational Needs—he designed, staffed, and managed a One-Stop Career Center system for regional government workforce-development programs. During the same period, he developed The Coach, an unpublished job-training guide used to train program participants. It combined research-based information, examples, demonstrations, data, statistics, graphics, practical exercises, and performance feedback. This new guide carries that systematic coaching approach into a workplace shaped by digital communication, online recruitment, changing skill requirements, and artificial intelligence.

Use of This Guide

This guide is designed for education and workforce-development training. Permission is required to reproduce or distribute its instructional content, except where learner worksheets are specifically identified for use by authorized participants.

Contents

Introduction

From the Original Coach to the Digital Career Coach
The Changing Path from College to Work
Finding, Obtaining and Maintaining Employment
A Human Approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI)

How to Use the Guide

The Four Strategic Questions
The Career Portfolio
Practice Feedback and Performance Assessment

Part I: Know Yourself and Choose Your Direction

Unit 1. Assess Your Current Skills and Employment Needs
Unit 2. Identify the Work and Career You Want
Unit 3. Identify and Demonstrate Digital Transferable and Human Skills
Unit 4. Set a Realistic Career Goal

Part II: Develop Your Strategic Job Search Plan

Unit 1. Research Occupations, Employers and Opportunities
Unit 2. Build a Professional Digital Identity
Unit 3. Use Networking and Digital Communication
Unit 4. Use AI to Support a Focused Job Search
Unit 5. Prepare a 90-Day Job Search Action Plan

Part III: Present Your Qualifications with Evidence

Unit 1. Write a Resume That Wins Approval
Unit 2. Prepare Applications and Job Inquiry Messages
Unit 3. Create a Digital Career Portfolio
Unit 4. Adapt Materials Without Misrepresenting Yourself
Unit 5. Follow Up and Evaluate Application Results

Part IV: Interview with Confidence

Unit 1. Before the Interview
Unit 2. During the Interview
Unit 3. After the Interview
Unit 4. Mock Interview Video and Feedback Practice

Part V: Maintain the Job and Continue Growing

Unit 1. Start Strong

Unit 2. Communicate and Collaborate Professionally

Unit 3. Use Digital Tools and AI Responsibly

Unit 4. Respond to Feedback and Continue Learning

Introduction

From the Original Coach to the Digital Career Coach

Looking for a job is a job itself. It requires purpose, organization, sustained effort, and the ability to learn from results. This principle guided the original edition of *The Coach*, which I developed while working with workforce investment program clients over twenty-five years ago. The guide did not promise participants a job. Instead, it taught them how to assess what they could offer, decide where they wanted to go, chart a practical route, present their qualifications, and change direction when their efforts did not produce the intended result.

That principle remains sound. The environment in which graduates apply it, however, has changed. A new graduate may now discover an opening online, communicate with an employer through a digital platform, submit materials to an automated screening system, participate in a video interview, and begin work with colleagues located in several places. Employers evaluate not only education and technical knowledge but also evidence of communication, problem solving, adaptability, collaboration, responsible judgment, and the ability to learn new tools.

Artificial intelligence adds another layer to this environment. Used responsibly, AI can help a job seeker explore occupations, analyze a job description, identify gaps, organize information, practice interview responses, and improve the clarity of a career document. However, it cannot decide what a person values, create experience that the person does not possess, or replace honest human judgment. The applicant remains responsible for every claim, decision, and communication.

Development and Illustration Note

This revised edition was developed from the author's original Coach materials and decades of workforce-development experience. Artificial intelligence tools were consulted to support research, organization, editing, and document preparation. The author reviewed and revised the content, made all substantive decisions, and assumes responsibility for the final guide.

Names and identifying details used in instructional examples—including people, educational institutions, employers, locations, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, and related details—are fictional unless explicitly identified as real. They are included solely for instructional and illustrative purposes.

Current Employment Context

The current entry-level market offers opportunity, but it increasingly rewards evidence of capability. The National Association of Colleges and Employers' 2026 spring update reported that employers expected to increase hiring for the Class of 2026 by 5.6 percent. At the same time, 70 percent of employers in NACE's Job Outlook 2026 survey reported using skills-based hiring for entry-level candidates, while fewer than 40 percent of graduating seniors were familiar with the term. More than 80 percent of employers said they identify desired skills in job descriptions. These findings reinforce the need for graduates to identify, document, and communicate what they can do—not merely list courses or credentials.

The need extends beyond the first job. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 estimated that 39 percent of workers' existing skill sets will be transformed or become outdated between 2025 and 2030. It identified AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, and technological literacy among the fastest-growing skills, alongside creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, curiosity,

and lifelong learning. The Coach therefore treats career readiness as an ongoing process of evidence, adaptation, responsible technology use, and continued learning.

Sources Consulted for the Introduction

National Association of Colleges and Employers. “Outlook Brightens for College Class of 2026 Entry-Level Hiring.” <https://www.nacweb.org/about-us/press/2026/outlook-brightens-for-college-class-of-2026-entry-level-hiring>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. “Skills-Based Hiring Grows, but College Students Don’t Fully Understand It.” <https://www.nacweb.org/about-us/press/2026/skills-based-hiring-grows-but-college-students-dont-fully-understand-it>

World Economic Forum. “The Future of Jobs Report 2025.” <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/digest/>

The Changing Path from College to Work

Graduation marks an important achievement, but it does not automatically produce workforce readiness. A degree establishes a foundation. The graduate must still translate courses, projects, employment, volunteer service, leadership, and life experience into evidence that an employer can understand. The challenge is not simply to list what was completed. It is to show what the applicant can contribute.

Digital workforce readiness therefore combines career direction with practical capability. It includes knowing how to locate and evaluate opportunities; communicate through email, video, and professional platforms; create accurate and targeted career materials; protect personal information; work productively with digital tools; and continue learning as responsibilities change. These abilities are most useful when they are connected to self-knowledge, sound ethics, and a realistic plan.

Finding, Obtaining and Maintaining Employment

This guide distinguishes among three related accomplishments. Finding a job means locating an opening that matches the applicant’s interests, qualifications, circumstances, and direction. Obtaining the job means presenting credible evidence, communicating value, and earning the employer’s confidence to assume the job. Maintaining the job means meeting expectations, working effectively with others, using technology responsibly, adapting to change, and continuing to grow.

The first available job is not always the job a graduate ultimately desires. Sometimes it is a necessary starting point, a source of experience, or a bridge to a longer-term goal. A strategic job seeker understands the difference, makes an informed choice, and continues building toward a meaningful career rather than waiting passively for the perfect opportunity.

A Human Approach to Artificial Intelligence

Technology should make the job search more informed and efficient without making the applicant’s voice less human. A resume should still represent the applicant’s actual preparation. An interview response should still reflect personal experience and judgment. A thank-you message should still sound like the person who participated in the conversation. In this guide, AI is treated as a tool for inquiry, organization, practice, and improvement—not as a substitute for identity, honesty, or effort.

Purpose and Intended Audience

The Coach is a practical learning guide for university and college students approaching graduation, recent graduates entering the workforce, and early-career job seekers who need a systematic approach to career preparation. It may be used independently or as the learner guide for an instructor-led Digital Workforce Readiness program.

Although designed principally for college and university graduates entering the workforce, The Coach may also benefit other young and early-career employees who want to strengthen their workplace performance, reassess their career direction, document newly developed capabilities, or prepare for advancement.

Learning Outcomes

By completing the guide and its practice activities, the learner will be able to:

- assess current strengths, employment needs, digital readiness, and skill gaps;
- identify a realistic target job and relate it to a longer-term career direction;
- develop and monitor a strategic job search plan;
- research occupations, openings, and employers using reliable digital sources;
- use digital communication and AI tools productively, ethically, and safely;
- prepare accurate, targeted, and evidence-based career materials;
- demonstrate qualifications in an interview with clarity and confidence;
- follow up professionally and evaluate the results of each application;
- enter employment prepared to contribute, adapt, and continue learning.

What This Guide Does Not Promise

No guide, technology, instructor, or employment program can guarantee a job. Labor-market conditions, location, qualifications, timing, competition, and employer decisions all affect results. The purpose of The Coach is to help each learner make better decisions, produce stronger evidence, communicate more effectively, and improve through disciplined practice and feedback.

How to Use the Guide

The guide is organized as a sequence of decisions and performances. Learners should complete the activities in order when beginning a job search. A learner who already has a clear target may return directly to a particular section when preparing an application or interview.

The Four Strategic Questions and Purposes

Strategic question	Purpose
1. Where are you now?	Assess your education, experience, transferable skills, digital readiness, needs, and constraints.
2. Where do you want to go?	Identify the work you want, the value you can contribute, and the longer-term direction the opportunity supports.
3. How will you get there?	Develop a focused plan for research, networking, applications, career documents, interview preparation, and follow-up.
4. What will you do if you do not reach the target in the allotted time?	Review evidence, seek feedback, adjust the goal or strategy, strengthen needed skills, and continue with a revised plan.

Build a Career Portfolio as You Work

Begin a digital career folder before starting the first activity. Use it to collect assessment results, occupational and employer research, job descriptions, skill-development evidence, resume versions, application messages, interview preparation notes, feedback, and follow-up records. By the end of the training, the folder should contain a usable career portfolio rather than a collection of disconnected exercises.

Learn Through Practice and Feedback

Reading about a job search is not sufficient preparation for conducting one. Each major section will combine a short check on learning with guided practice, a practical template, and clear evaluation criteria. Interview preparation will include role-playing, recorded mock interviews, self-review, peer feedback, and instructor evaluation. Useful feedback identifies a strength, an area for improvement, and the next action to take.

The Career Readiness Framework

The Coach moves from self-understanding to career performance. Learners may revisit an earlier decision when new information, experience, or feedback changes the plan.

Step	Focus	What the learner does	Performance evidence
1	Know yourself and choose your direction	Assess strengths, needs, interests, values, transferable skills, digital readiness, and gaps.	A realistic career goal
2	Develop a strategic job search plan	Research opportunities and employers; build a professional digital identity; network; schedule and track actions.	A measurable job search plan
3	Present qualifications with evidence	Create accurate, targeted resumes, messages, applications, and portfolio evidence with responsible AI support.	An application-ready career portfolio
4	Interview with confidence	Prepare before, perform during, follow up after, and improve through recorded practice and feedback.	A practiced interview and follow-up strategy
5	Maintain the job and continue growing	Meet expectations, communicate professionally, use technology responsibly, seek feedback, and continue learning.	A plan for the first 90 days and continued development

Three Measures of Progress

- **Finding the opportunity.** The learner can identify suitable openings and make informed choices about where to invest time and effort.
- **Obtaining the opportunity.** The learner can present credible evidence, communicate value, and respond professionally throughout the selection process.
- **Maintaining and building from the opportunity.** The learner can meet expectations, learn from feedback, adapt to changing tools and responsibilities, and use the position as part of a continuing career plan.

Part I: Know Yourself and Choose Your Direction



A successful job search begins before the first application is submitted. It begins with an honest understanding of what the applicant can do now, what the applicant needs, what work is being targeted, and what must be strengthened to compete responsibly.

Part I will guide the learner through four connected tasks:

Unit 1. Skills Needs and Digital Readiness Assessment

Unit 2. Identify the Work and Career You Want

Unit 3. Identify and Demonstrate Digital Transferable and Human Skills

Unit 4. Set a Realistic Career Goal

Opening Reflection

Before beginning the assessment, write a brief response to each of the following questions:

What type of work would I be proud and motivated to do?

What can I already do that would be useful to an employer?

What evidence can I provide?

What prevents me from pursuing the work I want?

Which skill or behavior would most improve my readiness during the next four weeks?

Personal Learning Goal

Based on your opening reflection, identify one specific result you want to achieve during this training and explain how you will determine that you have achieved it.

Unit 1. Skills Needs and Digital Readiness Assessment

A strategic job search begins with an accurate diagnosis. This unit helps you identify what you can already demonstrate, what the target job requires, and which gaps deserve immediate attention. The result is not a label or a test score. It is an evidence-based readiness profile and a practical development plan.

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- distinguish a skill claim from evidence of performance;
- identify career, human, digital, and AI-related skills relevant to a target job;
- rate your present level using a consistent four-level scale;
- compare your evidence with the requirements of an actual job description;
- select priority gaps and create a four-week improvement plan;
- add a verified Career Readiness Profile to your career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

A degree tells an employer what you studied. It does not, by itself, show how well you can apply knowledge, communicate, solve problems, use technology, or work with others. New graduates therefore need to translate academic, work, service, and life experiences into observable evidence of readiness.

Current workforce evidence supports this emphasis. The World Economic Forum reported that employers expect 39 percent of workers' existing skill sets to change or become outdated between 2025 and 2030. Analytical thinking remains the most frequently identified core skill, while AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, and technological literacy are among the fastest-growing skills. The National Association of Colleges and Employers in the United States identifies career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, and technology among the broad competencies that prepare college graduates for work and continuing career management.

These findings do not mean that every graduate must become a programmer or AI specialist. They mean that graduates should be able to learn new systems, evaluate information, use appropriate tools, protect data, communicate their reasoning, and remain responsible for the quality of their work.

3. Essential Information and Research

The assessment uses six connected readiness areas:

Readiness area	What it means
Career direction and self-development	Knowing your strengths, limitations, values, needs, target, and next learning priorities.
Communication and collaboration	Exchanging information clearly; listening; adapting to audiences; and contributing to shared work.
Critical thinking and problem solving	Defining a problem, evaluating information, selecting a reasonable response, and explaining the decision.
Professionalism and adaptability	Being dependable, prepared, ethical, organized, receptive to feedback, and able to adjust when conditions change.
Digital work capability	Finding and managing information; communicating and creating content; protecting data; and solving routine technology problems.

Readiness area	What it means
AI readiness and responsibility	Selecting appropriate AI assistance, writing useful instructions, checking output, protecting confidential information, and disclosing use when required.

The Four Level Evidence Scale

Level	Evidence standard
1 Beginning	I cannot yet demonstrate this skill without substantial guidance.
2 Developing	I can demonstrate parts of the skill with guidance or in a familiar situation.
3 Ready	I can demonstrate the skill independently and provide credible evidence.
4 Adaptive	I can apply the skill in varied situations, improve it through feedback, and help others use it.

Rate what you can demonstrate now—not what you believe you could probably do. A rating of 3 or 4 requires evidence such as a course project, work product, volunteer result, presentation, supervisor comment, performance record, or clearly described accomplishment.

4. Realistic Example

Leila recently completed a bachelor's degree in business administration and wants an entry-level project coordinator position. She describes herself as an excellent communicator and highly skilled with technology. Her first self-rating gives her a 4 in both areas. When she looks for evidence, she finds that she prepared class presentations, coordinated deadlines for a team project, used spreadsheets to track expenses, and organized files in a shared workspace. She has not conducted a formal online meeting, used a project-management platform, or handled confidential organizational data.

Leila revises her ratings. She selects 3 for communication because she can provide several examples of independent performance. She selects 2 for digital work capability because her experience is useful but narrower than the target job requires. Her lower rating is not a failure. It identifies a practical training priority.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

Select one target job. Use an actual entry-level description rather than a general career label.

- **Identify required performances.** Underline measurable action verbs such as analyze, coordinate, write, present, manage, verify, or collaborate. Avoid using universal verbs, such as know, understand, appreciate, etc. These verbs represent immeasurable tasks unless they are tied to specific performance standards.
- **Translate requirements into skills.** For example, “coordinate weekly virtual meetings” requires planning, digital communication, scheduling, and follow-up.
- **Locate personal evidence.** Review courses, projects, employment, internships, volunteer service, leadership, and independent work.
- **Rate present readiness.** Apply the four-level evidence scale consistently.
- **Verify the rating.** Name the evidence and, when possible, identify a person or product that can confirm it.
- **Prioritize gaps.** Choose the two or three gaps most important to the target job and most realistic to improve now.

- **Plan and document improvement.** Select an activity, deadline, evidence product, and source of feedback.

Demonstration from Requirement to Evidence

Job requirement	Prepare clear progress updates for team members.
Skill meaning	Select essential information and communicate it concisely to the appropriate audience.
Possible evidence	A weekly project update, meeting summary, presentation, or supervisor-approved message.
Current rating	2 Developing: completed classroom updates but needs practice with professional audiences.
Improvement action	Prepare two one-page progress updates from a sample project and obtain feedback.
Portfolio evidence	Revised update showing the original, feedback received, and final version.

6. Digital and AI Applications

Digital tools can help you organize evidence and compare it with a job description. AI can help identify possible skill categories or suggest questions for reflection. It must not invent experience, assign your final rating, or receive private employer, student, client, or health information.

A responsible AI-supported process:

- Remove names, contact information, and confidential details before entering material into an AI system.
- Ask the system to identify the performances and skills explicitly stated in the job description.
- Compare the response with the original description and correct omissions or unsupported conclusions.
- Provide your own experience notes and ask for questions that could help you locate evidence.
- Write the final evidence statement yourself and verify that every claim is accurate.
- Follow the employer's, institution's, or instructor's rules for disclosing AI assistance.

Sample prompt

"Analyze the following job description. List the work behaviors stated or clearly implied, group them into career, communication, problem-solving, professional, digital, and AI-related skills, and quote the short phrase that supports each classification. Do not add requirements that are not present. Then ask me questions that will help me identify truthful evidence from my education, projects, employment, or volunteer experience."

7. Guided Practice Activity

- **Career Readiness Self Assessment**

Choose one rating for each statement. In the evidence column, name a specific example. If you cannot name evidence, do not select 3 or 4.

A. Career Direction and Self Development

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I can describe the type of work I am targeting and explain why it fits my direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I can identify my strongest relevant skills and the gaps I must address.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I seek feedback and turn it into a specific improvement action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can set a realistic short-term goal and monitor my progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

B. Communication and Collaboration

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I write clear, concise, and professional messages for the intended audience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I listen carefully, ask useful questions, and confirm my understanding.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I contribute reliably to team tasks, deadlines, and shared decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can present an idea or result confidently in person or by video.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

C. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I define a problem before selecting a solution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I evaluate the reliability and relevance of information from several sources.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I use evidence to make a decision and can explain my reasoning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I review results and adjust my approach when the first plan does not work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

D. Professionalism and Adaptability

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I arrive prepared, meet deadlines, and take responsibility for the quality of my work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I organize competing tasks and communicate early when guidance is needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I respond constructively to feedback and changing expectations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I act honestly and protect information entrusted to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

E. Digital Work Capability

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I can locate, evaluate, organize, and retrieve digital information efficiently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can collaborate through email, video meetings, shared documents, and calendars.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can create accessible, professional documents, presentations, or spreadsheets.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I use secure passwords, recognize common risks, and protect personal or organizational data.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can learn an unfamiliar digital tool and solve routine problems using reliable guidance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

F. AI Readiness and Responsibility

Performance statement	1	2	3	4	Evidence example
I can decide when AI assistance is appropriate and when human judgment is required.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can give an AI system clear context, a specific task, constraints, and an expected format.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I verify AI output for accuracy, bias, unsupported claims, and missing information.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I revise AI-assisted work so it is accurate, useful, and expressed in my own voice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I protect confidential information and follow applicable rules for disclosure and attribution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

- **Identify Your Priorities**

Review the target job and your evidence. Select no more than three development priorities. A low rating is not automatically a priority; relevance to the target job matters.

Priority skill	Present level	Improvement activity	Evidence to produce	Completion date

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

1. What is the primary purpose of the readiness assessment?

- A. To guarantee employment
- B. To identify evidence, gaps, and priorities
- C. To compare graduates with one another
- D. To produce one overall intelligence score

2. Which rating requires independent performance and credible evidence?

- A. Beginning
- B. Developing
- C. Ready
- D. Unrated

3. A learner reports excellent teamwork but cannot describe an example. What is the best next action?

- A. Accept the claim
- B. Give a rating of 4
- C. Locate and examine actual evidence
- D. Remove teamwork from the assessment

4. Which is the strongest evidence of digital communication?

- A. Saying that email is easy
- B. Owning a smartphone
- C. A clear project update written for a real audience
- D. Following many professional accounts

5. What should determine whether a low-rated skill becomes a priority?

- A. Its relevance to the target job
- B. Whether friends have the skill
- C. Whether it sounds technical
- D. Its position on the assessment

6. Which is an appropriate use of AI during assessment?

- A. Inventing an accomplishment
- B. Assigning the learner's final rating
- C. Identifying skill language in a job description for verification
- D. Entering confidential records for analysis

7. Why should the learner compare a self-rating with evidence?

- A. To lengthen the activity
- B. To reduce unsupported confidence or unnecessary self-doubt
- C. To avoid feedback
- D. To replace the job description

8. What is the final product of this unit?

- A. A generic list of popular skills
- B. A Career Readiness Profile and improvement plan
- C. A completed job application
- D. An employer's hiring decision

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. The assessment diagnoses readiness and identifies action; it cannot guarantee employment.
- 2 C. Ready means the learner can perform independently and provide evidence.
- 3 C. A skill claim becomes credible when it is supported by a specific performance or product.
- 4 C. A work sample demonstrates performance more convincingly than familiarity with a device.
- 5 A. Improvement priorities must be tied to the target job and the learner's plan.
- 6 C. AI may assist with analysis, but the learner must verify the result and protect information.
- 7 B. Evidence corrects both overestimation and underestimation of readiness.
- 8 B. The portfolio product combines verified strengths, relevant gaps, and planned improvement.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I used an actual target job or a clearly defined occupational goal.
- ☐ I completed every readiness area using the same four-level scale.
- ☐ Every rating of 3 or 4 is supported by a specific example or product.
- ☐ I distinguished direct evidence from assumptions about what I could probably do.
- ☐ I compared my profile with the performances required by the target job.
- ☐ I selected no more than three relevant and achievable priorities.
- ☐ Each improvement activity has a deadline and evidence product.
- ☐ I used AI only as permitted and verified all AI-assisted analysis.
- ☐ A peer, instructor, mentor, or career professional reviewed my profile.
- ☐ I revised the profile in response to useful feedback.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add the following items to your digital career folder:

- the target job description or occupational profile;
- the completed Career Readiness Self Assessment;
- two or more evidence samples or links;
- the three-priority improvement plan;

- a brief feedback record identifying who reviewed the profile and what changed;
- a one-paragraph Career Readiness Statement summarizing present strengths and next steps.

Career Readiness Statement Template

"I am preparing for _____. My strongest relevant capabilities are _____, supported by _____. I am currently strengthening _____. During the next four weeks, I will _____ and demonstrate improvement by producing _____."

Research Sources for This Unit

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined.

<https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

World Economic Forum. The Future of Jobs Report 2025. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>

European Commission Joint Research Centre. Digital Competence Framework for Citizens.

https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/scientific-activities/key-competences-lifelong-learning/digital-competence-framework-digcomp_en

O*NET Resource Center. About O*NET. <https://www.onetcenter.org/overview.html>

Unit 2. Identify the Work and Career You Want

A productive job search needs a clear direction. This unit helps you move from a broad hope such as “I want a good job” to a researched and realistic target. You will examine what interests you, what you can contribute, what conditions you need, and what opportunities are available. You will then select a primary target and a reasonable alternative without treating either choice as permanent.

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- distinguish among an occupation, a job, and a developing career;
- identify work activities, interests, values, needs, and conditions that influence career fit;
- research occupations through reliable workforce-information sources;
- compare at least three occupational options using consistent criteria;
- select a primary employment target and a realistic alternative;
- explain the selection with evidence rather than preference alone;
- add a Target Career Decision Brief to your career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

A job seeker who targets everything usually presents a weak case for any one position. Employers need to understand what work the applicant is prepared to perform and why the opportunity fits. A clear target also improves the quality of occupational research, networking, resume evidence, interview preparation, and skill development.

Career direction should not be confused with choosing one permanent occupation. Entry-level work may be a destination, a bridge, or a practical starting point. The immediate decision is to choose a direction that is desirable enough to sustain effort, realistic enough to pursue now, and useful enough to build future capability.

The O*NET Interest Profiler helps individuals identify broad work interests and connect the results with occupations. The Occupational Outlook Handbook allows learners to compare work performed, education and training, pay, projected growth, and related occupations. These tools support a decision; they do not make the decision for the learner.

3. Essential Information and Research

Begin by separating three related ideas:

Term	Working meaning
Occupation	A recognized type of work performed across many organizations, such as project coordinator, accountant, or instructional designer.
Job	A particular position with a specific employer, location, schedule, set of duties, and compensation arrangement.
Career	The developing pattern of work, learning, contribution, and advancement across time; it may include several jobs or occupations.

Use Five Decision Lenses

Decision lens	Question to investigate
Work interests	Which activities hold my attention and give me useful energy?
Capabilities and evidence	What can I perform now, and what can I learn within a reasonable period?

Decision lens	Question to investigate
Values and contribution	What results, responsibilities, or people do I want my work to serve?
Needs and conditions	What income, location, schedule, accessibility, stability, or flexibility do I require?
Opportunity and pathway	Are suitable entry points available, and can this work build toward my longer-term direction?

No single lens should control the decision. Interest without opportunity may not produce a workable first step. Opportunity without acceptable conditions may not be sustainable. A skill gap may require development, but it does not automatically rule out an occupation.

4. Realistic Example

Leila begins with a broad goal: “I want a business job where I can work with people.” Her interest results suggest that she enjoys organizing, persuading, and helping. Instead of accepting the first suggested title, she researches three possibilities: project coordinator, customer success coordinator, and operations assistant.

Project coordination provides the strongest connection to her course projects and preference for organizing work. Customer success offers more direct interaction but may require schedules she cannot consistently accept. Operations work is locally available and could build related experience, although some openings emphasize inventory systems she has not used. Leila selects project coordinator as her primary target and operations assistant as an alternative. She records customer success as a future possibility rather than forcing it into the present search.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

- **Start with activities, not titles.** List tasks you want to perform, problems you want to solve, and people or results you want to support.
- **Identify nonnegotiable needs.** Record essential conditions such as geographic limits, minimum income, schedule, accessibility, or authorization to work.
- **Generate several possibilities.** Use interests, degree-related options, transferable skills, conversations, and occupational tools to create a short list.
- **Research the work.** Examine duties, work settings, entry requirements, technology, typical preparation, pay, outlook, and advancement.
- **Verify with people and openings.** Compare formal occupational information with current job descriptions and, when possible, an informational conversation.
- **Compare consistently.** Apply the same five decision lenses to each option. Do not change the criteria merely to protect a favorite choice.
- **Select a target and alternative.** Choose one primary direction for focused preparation and one related option that remains credible.
- **State the decision provisionally.** Explain why each target fits now, what evidence supports it, and what information could cause you to reconsider.

Demonstration of a Reasoned Choice

Primary target	Entry-level project coordinator
Why it fits	Strong match with organizing work, communicating progress, coordinating deadlines, and supporting a team.
Present evidence	Team project schedule, expense-tracking spreadsheet, presentations, and meeting summaries.

Primary target	Entry-level project coordinator
Development need	Practice with a current project-management platform and professional status reporting.
Alternative target	Operations assistant
Reason for alternative	Uses related coordination skills, has local entry points, and can build evidence for later project roles.
Review point	Reassess after four weeks of research, two informational conversations, and ten suitable-opening samples.

6. Digital and AI Applications

Use O*NET and the Occupational Outlook Handbook to develop and investigate possibilities. Search several job boards only after you have identified likely titles and related terms. Save a small sample of current openings so you can observe how employers describe similar work differently.

AI can help organize occupational information, compare options against criteria you supply, or generate questions for an informational interview. It can also produce confident but inaccurate descriptions, outdated salary figures, or invented local opportunities. Verify every material claim in an authoritative source or an actual employer posting.

Sample prompt

"I am exploring the following three occupations: _____. My required conditions are _____, and the work activities I prefer are _____. Create a comparison table using only the information I provide below. Mark missing evidence as 'research needed.' Do not recommend a final choice. Instead, ask five questions that will help me make the decision."

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Define What You Want from Work

Three work activities I would like to perform regularly:

Three problems, results, or people I would like my work to support:

Three capabilities I want to use and strengthen:

My nonnegotiable employment needs:

Conditions I prefer but could negotiate:

Work conditions I want to avoid and why:

B. Investigate Three Occupational Options

Use authoritative sources, current employer postings, and at least one human source when available.

Research field	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Occupation and related titles			
Main work activities			
Typical work setting and schedule			
Education experience and credentials			
Human digital and technical skills			
Technology and AI use			
Pay range in the relevant location			
Projected demand and current openings			
Advancement or related pathways			
Source links and date checked			

C. Compare Fit and Feasibility

Rate each option from 1 low to 4 high. Add a short reason for every rating; numbers without evidence are not a decision.

Criterion	Option 1 rating and reason	Option 2 rating and reason	Option 3 rating and reason
Interest in daily activities	Rating: ____ Reason: _____ _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____ _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____ _____
Use of present capabilities	Rating: ____ Reason: _____ _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____ _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____ _____

Criterion	Option 1 rating and reason	Option 2 rating and reason	Option 3 rating and reason
Fit with values and desired contribution	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____
Fit with essential needs and conditions	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____
Realistic entry requirements	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____
Availability of credible entry points	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____
Value for longer-term development	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____	Rating: ____ Reason: _____

D. Make and Test the Decision

My primary employment target is:

The strongest evidence supporting this choice is:

The most important unanswered question is:

My realistic alternative target is:

I will review this decision on the following date and after collecting this evidence:

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

1. Which statement best describes an occupation?

- A. One position with one employer
- B. A recognized type of work across organizations
- C. Every job held during a lifetime
- D. A list of preferred duties

2. Why should a learner begin with preferred work activities rather than job titles?

- A. Titles are always inaccurate
- B. Activities reveal the work itself and can connect to several titles
- C. Employers do not use titles
- D. Activities determine salary

3. Which source is best for comparing national occupational duties, education, pay, and outlook?

- A. An anonymous social post
- B. An AI answer without sources
- C. The Occupational Outlook Handbook
- D. One employer advertisement

4. What is the proper role of an interest assessment?

- A. Make the final career decision
- B. Guarantee satisfaction
- C. Generate and focus possibilities for investigation
- D. Eliminate the need for research

5. Why should the same criteria be applied to every option?

- A. To create identical scores
- B. To support a fair comparison and expose unsupported preference
- C. To avoid human judgment
- D. To select the highest-paying occupation

6. When may a lower-rated option remain useful?

- A. When it is a credible alternative or pathway
- B. Only when AI recommends it
- C. When no evidence is available
- D. Only when it has the best title

7. What is the safest use of AI in career exploration?

- A. Accept its salary figures immediately
- B. Let it choose the career
- C. Use it to organize supplied evidence and identify research questions
- D. Give it confidential records

8. What is the final product of this unit?

- A. A permanent career contract
- B. A Target Career Decision Brief
- C. A completed resume
- D. A personality diagnosis

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. An occupation is a recognized type of work found across organizations; a job is one particular position.
- 2 B. Similar activities appear under different titles, so activity language widens and improves the search.
- 3 C. The Occupational Outlook Handbook presents comparable occupational information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- 4 C. Interest results suggest possibilities for investigation; they do not replace evidence, needs, opportunity, or judgment.
- 5 B. Consistent criteria make the comparison defensible and reduce the temptation to protect a favorite choice.
- 6 A. A related alternative can provide a realistic entry point and build evidence for the longer-term direction.

- 7 C. AI can structure information and questions, but important claims and recommendations require human verification.
- 8 B. The Target Career Decision Brief records the primary target, alternative, evidence, gaps, and review point.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I described preferred work activities rather than relying only on job titles.
- ☐ I separated essential needs from conditions I merely prefer.
- ☐ I investigated at least three plausible occupational options.
- ☐ I used authoritative occupational information and current employer postings.
- ☐ I recorded source links and the date each source was checked.
- ☐ I compared every option with the same five decision lenses.
- ☐ I supported ratings and conclusions with evidence or marked research still needed.
- ☐ I selected one primary target and one credible alternative.
- ☐ I identified a development need and an unanswered question.
- ☐ I obtained feedback and established a date for reviewing the decision.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Target Career Decision Brief containing:

- the primary occupation and related job titles;
- the alternative occupation and why it remains credible;
- a concise description of preferred work activities, contribution, and required conditions;
- the completed three-option research and comparison tables;
- links to authoritative sources and representative current openings;
- evidence that presently supports the target and the most important development need;
- one unanswered question, one next research action, and a decision-review date.

Target Career Statement Template

"My primary employment target is _____. I selected it because the work involves _____, fits my need for _____, and allows me to contribute _____. My present evidence includes _____. I must still strengthen or investigate _____. My alternative target is _____ because _____. I will review this decision on _____ after collecting _____."

Research Sources for This Unit

O*NET Resource Center. O*NET Interest Profiler. <https://www.onetcenter.org/IP.html>

O*NET OnLine. Occupational information and career exploration. <https://www.onetonline.org/>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

CareerOneStop. Career exploration and assessment resources.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Assessments/assessments.aspx>

Unit 3. Identify and Demonstrate Digital Transferable and Human Skills

Employers do not hire a degree, a course title, or a list of adjectives. They hire a person who can perform useful work and provide credible evidence of that performance. This unit helps you recognize capabilities developed across education, employment, service, family responsibilities, and independent projects; translate them into employer language; and identify the digital and human skills that make those capabilities portable across jobs.

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- distinguish technical, digital, transferable, and human skills;
- extract skill requirements from a target job description;
- identify capabilities developed in academic, work, service, and life settings;
- translate an experience into a concise performance-and-evidence statement;
- analyze combinations of human and digital skills used in the same work task;
- separate evidence-supported capabilities from unsupported claims;
- add a Skills Translation and Evidence Map to your career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

Entry-level applicants often underestimate what they can offer because they look only for experience gained in a job with the same title. Employers, however, describe work through actions: coordinate, analyze, write, solve, present, schedule, verify, collaborate, and adapt. A course project, internship, volunteer assignment, student organization, caregiving responsibility, or independent digital project may provide relevant evidence when the applicant explains what was done, how it was done, and what resulted.

The need is not to choose between digital capability and human capability. Modern work regularly combines them. A project coordinator may use a shared workspace, spreadsheet, or AI-assisted draft while also exercising judgment, communication, organization, ethical responsibility, and follow-through. NACE identifies technology, communication, critical thinking, teamwork, professionalism, leadership, career and self-development, and equity and inclusion as connected career-readiness competencies. The World Economic Forum likewise reports strong demand for analytical thinking, resilience, flexibility, leadership, social influence, technological literacy, and continuing learning.

3. Essential Information and Research

Skill category	Working meaning	Possible evidence
Technical or occupational	Specialized knowledge or procedures used in a field or occupation.	Accounting reconciliation, laboratory procedure, instructional design, coding, equipment operation
Digital	The ability to select and use digital systems to communicate, create, organize, analyze, collaborate, and protect information.	Spreadsheet analysis, virtual meeting management, digital content, shared-file workflow, privacy practice
Transferable	A capability learned in one setting that can be applied in another setting or occupation.	Planning, research, writing, scheduling, customer service, data organization, problem solving
Human	Judgment and interpersonal behavior that help people work responsibly and effectively with others.	Listening, empathy, collaboration, adaptability, ethical judgment, conflict management

Use the Performance Evidence Chain

A useful skill statement connects five elements: situation, task, action, tool or method, and result. The tool is not the skill by itself. For example, naming Microsoft Excel shows familiarity; explaining that you cleaned and organized survey data in Excel, checked formulas, produced a summary chart, and helped a team make a decision demonstrates performance.

Element	Question
Situation	Where and under what conditions did the work occur?
Task	What responsibility, problem, or desired result existed?
Action	What did you personally do?
Tool or method	Which digital system, procedure, or collaborative method did you use?
Result and evidence	What changed, improved, was completed, or can be shown?

Analyze Skill Combinations

Most meaningful performances draw on several capabilities. Preparing a virtual presentation may combine research, source evaluation, slide design, written communication, speaking, accessibility, time management, and response to questions. Do not inflate the number of skills. Identify the few capabilities that were essential to the result and that matter to the target job.

4. Realistic Example

Leila's target is an entry-level project coordinator position. At first, she writes, 'Good at teamwork, communication, and technology.' The statement is too general to help an employer. She reviews a senior course project and reconstructs the work: a five-person team had four weeks to propose a community-business event. Leila created the shared schedule, assigned deadlines after the group agreed on responsibilities, sent weekly progress summaries, and followed up when two tasks were late. The team submitted the proposal on time and received a strong evaluation for organization.

Leila now identifies a skill combination: project organization, digital collaboration, written communication, respectful follow-up, and accountability. Her evidence includes the schedule, two progress updates, the final proposal, and instructor feedback. She can use the same evidence in a resume bullet, portfolio entry, application response, or interview example without claiming professional experience she did not have.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

Collect experiences. List projects, courses, jobs, internships, volunteer service, leadership, caregiving, community work, and independent learning.

Identify the performance. For each promising experience, write the action you performed rather than the title of the experience.

Locate the target language. Highlight verbs, tools, standards, and results in representative job descriptions.

Match cautiously. Connect only experiences that show the same or a reasonably related performance.

Build the evidence chain. Record the situation, task, action, tool or method, and result.

Name the skill combination. Select the occupational, digital, transferable, and human capabilities actually used.

Verify the claim. Locate a product, record, result, or person who can support the statement.

Translate for the audience. Write a brief statement using language appropriate to the target job while preserving the truth of the experience.

Request feedback. Ask whether a reviewer can understand what you did, how well you did it, and why it matters.

Demonstration from Experience to Employer Language

Stage	Leila's entry
Original experience	Senior business course project completed by a five-person team
Target requirement	Coordinate schedules, communicate progress, and follow up on assigned work
Performance evidence	Created shared schedule; issued weekly updates; followed up on late tasks; proposal submitted on time
Skill combination	Organization, digital collaboration, written communication, accountability, tact
Translated statement	Coordinated a five-member course project through a shared schedule and weekly progress updates, helping the team submit its proposal on time.

6. Digital and AI Applications

A spreadsheet or portfolio system can help you inventory experiences and link each claim to evidence. AI can help identify verbs in job descriptions, suggest possible skill labels, or ask questions that help you remember evidence. It cannot determine that you possess a skill, invent a result, or turn participation into leadership. Remove personal and confidential information, compare every suggestion with the original source, and write the final statement in your own accurate voice.

Sample prompt

'Compare the performance verbs in this job description with the experience notes I provide. Suggest possible connections, but label each as direct, related, or unsupported. Ask me for missing evidence. Do not invent tools, responsibilities, numbers, or results.'

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Experience Inventory

Experience	What I did	Result or product	Evidence available
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

B. Target Job Skill Language

Job-description phrase	Required performance	Skill combination	Importance 1–4

Job-description phrase	Required performance	Skill combination	Importance 1–4

C. Build Three Evidence Chains

Evidence element	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Situation			
Task			
Action			
Tool or method			
Result			
Verifier or product			

D. Translate the Evidence

Write three accurate statements that begin with a strong action verb, name the work performed, and include a result or useful purpose. Ask a reviewer to mark any word that is vague, unsupported, or likely to be misunderstood.

1.

2.

3.

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

1. Which statement best demonstrates a skill?

- A. I am a natural leader.
- B. I enjoy technology.
- C. I coordinated a five-person project and documented weekly progress.
- D. I took several classes.

2. Why is a software name alone weak evidence?

- A. Employers dislike software.
- B. It does not show what the applicant accomplished with the tool.
- C. Digital tools never transfer across jobs.
- D. Only certifications count.

3. Which capability is transferable?

- A. A procedure unique to one machine only.
- B. Organizing deadlines across several assignments.

- C. An unsupported personality label.
- D. A particular employer's password.

4. What makes a human skill credible?

- A. A popular label.
- B. A high self-rating.
- C. Observed behavior and a relevant result.
- D. An AI-generated description.

5. Which is the safest AI-supported action?

- A. Adding a result that sounds reasonable.
- B. Finding job-description verbs and verifying them against the source.
- C. Uploading confidential evaluations.
- D. Letting AI certify proficiency.

6. When is an academic project relevant to a job?

- A. Only when the titles are identical.
- B. When it provides evidence of a required or related performance.
- C. Whenever the grade was high.
- D. Only after graduation.

7. What should a translated skill statement preserve?

- A. The exact truth and limits of the experience.
- B. Every suggested keyword.
- C. The strongest possible title.
- D. A guarantee of future performance.

8. What is the final product of this unit?

- A. A personality label.
- B. A Skills Translation and Evidence Map.
- C. A completed job interview.
- D. An employer reference check.

Answer Feedback

- 1 C. The statement identifies a performance, scale, and evidence rather than a personal label.
- 2 B. A tool becomes meaningful when the applicant explains the task, method, and result.
- 3 B. Organization can be applied across courses, projects, jobs, and occupations.
- 4 C. Human skills are demonstrated through behavior in a real situation and its consequences.
- 5 B. AI may assist with analysis, but the learner must verify the output and protect information.
- 6 B. Relevance depends on comparable performance, not identical titles.
- 7 A. Translation improves clarity; it must not exaggerate the experience.
- 8 B. The map connects target requirements, personal evidence, skill combinations, and development needs.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I examined more than one source of experience, including education, work, service, or life responsibilities.
- ☐ I used action language to describe what I personally did.

- ☐ I extracted required performances from representative target-job descriptions.
- ☐ I distinguished technical, digital, transferable, and human capabilities.
- ☐ I identified realistic skill combinations rather than creating an inflated list.
- ☐ Every important skill claim is connected to a result, product, record, or verifier.
- ☐ My translated statements use employer-relevant language without changing the truth.
- ☐ I removed vague labels or supported them with observable behavior.
- ☐ I verified AI-assisted suggestions and protected personal or confidential information.
- ☐ I revised at least one statement after receiving useful feedback.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Skills Translation and Evidence Map containing:

- five to eight priority capabilities required by the target job;
- the job-description phrase supporting each capability;
- at least three complete performance evidence chains;
- links or references to available work samples, results, or verifiers;
- three translated skill statements suitable for later adaptation;
- one capability that needs stronger evidence and a plan for producing it;
- a brief feedback note explaining what was clarified or corrected.

Skill Evidence Summary Template

'For the target role of _____, I can presently demonstrate _____, _____, and _____. My strongest evidence is _____. I need stronger evidence of _____, which I will develop by _____.'

Research Sources for This Unit

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined.

<https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

World Economic Forum. The Future of Jobs Report 2025. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>

European Commission Joint Research Centre. Digital Competence Framework for Citizens.

https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/scientific-activities/key-competences-lifelong-learning/digital-competence-framework-digcomp_en

O*NET OnLine. Skills Search and occupational information. <https://www.onetonline.org/skills/>

Unit 4. Set a Realistic Career Goal

A direction becomes useful when it is translated into a specific result, a workable time frame, and actions that can be monitored. This unit helps you establish a realistic employment goal without making it timid or inflexible. You will connect the target selected in Unit 2 with the evidence and development priorities identified in Units 1 and 3, then create a 90-day plan that can be reviewed and revised.

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- distinguish a career direction, employment goal, development goal, and activity;
- write a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound employment goal;
- use evidence and labor-market information to test whether the goal is realistic;
- identify milestones, weekly actions, resources, barriers, and contingency responses;
- select indicators that measure both effort and results;
- establish review points and adjust the plan without abandoning the direction prematurely;
- add a Career Goal and 90-Day Action Plan to your career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

A broad intention such as ‘find a good job soon’ provides little guidance. It does not define the work, the evidence needed, the actions to take, or the point at which the strategy should be reviewed. At the other extreme, an unrealistic promise such as ‘obtain my ideal job within two weeks’ treats an employer’s decision as if it were fully controlled by the applicant.

A useful goal separates what you can control from what you can influence. You can control the quality of your research, skill development, materials, preparation, record keeping, and follow-up. You can influence—but cannot control—referrals, interviews, offers, and hiring decisions. Effective planning therefore monitors both action indicators and result indicators.

3. Essential Information and Research

Planning term	Meaning	Example
Career direction	The broader field or contribution toward which you are developing.	Coordinate projects and operations in a service-oriented organization
Employment goal	A defined work result pursued within a review period.	Become competitive for entry-level project coordinator roles during the next 90 days
Development goal	A capability or evidence gap to be strengthened.	Produce evidence of spreadsheet tracking and project-status reporting
Activity	A scheduled action supporting a goal.	Complete a spreadsheet project and obtain feedback by October 15

Test the Goal with Seven Questions

Test	Question
Specific	Does the goal identify a role, field, location or work arrangement, and intended result?
Measurable	What evidence will show progress or completion?
Achievable	Is the next step possible with the available time, resources, and qualifications?

Test	Question
Relevant	Does it fit the chosen direction, needs, values, and present evidence?
Time-bound	When will action begin, milestones occur, and the goal be reviewed?
Evidence-based	What occupational information, openings, and personal evidence support it?
Adaptable	Which conditions would justify revising the target, strategy, or time frame?

Use Two Types of Indicators

Indicator type	What it measures	Examples
Action indicators	Work under the learner's direct control.	Hours of targeted skill practice; employer conversations; tailored applications; mock interviews
Result indicators	Responses or outcomes influenced but not controlled by the learner.	Responses received; interviews; referrals; requests for work samples; offers

4. Realistic Example

Leila's first goal is, 'Get a project coordinator job as soon as possible.' After completing the earlier units, she revises it: 'During the next 90 days, I will become a competitive candidate for entry-level project coordinator or closely related operations roles within commuting distance or approved hybrid arrangements. I will strengthen spreadsheet tracking and project-status reporting, prepare verified application materials, conduct two informational conversations, and submit six carefully targeted applications per week after my materials are reviewed.'

The goal does not guarantee an offer by day 90. It creates controlled actions, evidence products, and measurable review points. Leila will examine results after four weeks. If suitable openings are scarce, she may widen related job titles or geographic arrangements. If openings are available but her applications receive no response, she will review targeting, evidence, and materials before increasing volume.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

State the direction. Name the broader work or contribution you want to pursue.

Define the immediate target. Identify the primary role and a related alternative.

Establish the review period. Use a period long enough to produce evidence and observe results; this guide uses 90 days.

Test feasibility. Compare qualifications, gaps, location, schedule, compensation needs, and representative openings.

Write the goal. Include the target, intended result, time frame, and major evidence or action commitments.

Break the goal into milestones. Identify what should be completed by days 30, 60, and 90.

Schedule weekly actions. Place recurring research, development, networking, application, and review tasks on a calendar.

Anticipate barriers. Identify likely obstacles and a practical response for each.

Track action and result indicators. Record what you did and what happened.

Review and adjust. Change the strategy when evidence supports a change; record why the decision was made.

Demonstration of Goal Alignment

Evidence from earlier units	Planning decision
Primary target: project coordinator; alternative: operations assistant	Use both titles in research but prepare first for project coordination
Strength: team scheduling and progress communication	Feature verified course-project evidence
Gap: spreadsheet tracking beyond basic coursework	Complete and document a realistic tracking project
Need: acceptable commute or hybrid schedule	Apply only when location and schedule requirements are workable
Unanswered question: which tools local employers use	Review ten postings and ask two professionals

6. Digital and AI Applications

Use a calendar, spreadsheet, or project board to schedule actions and record evidence. A simple dashboard can show weekly research, networking, skill practice, tailored applications, follow-up, and employer responses. AI can help break a verified goal into possible tasks, identify missing dependencies, or generate reflection questions. It should not predict that an offer will occur, submit applications without review, or turn activity volume into evidence of quality.

Sample prompt

‘Using only the career goal, constraints, skill gaps, and deadlines I provide, organize a draft 90-day plan with 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones. Separate actions I control from results I can only influence. Flag assumptions and do not invent employers, qualifications, or accomplishments.’

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Draft and Test the Goal

My career direction:

My primary employment target:

My realistic alternative:

My 90-day employment goal:

A. Draft and Test the Goal

Goal test	Evidence that the goal passes	Revision needed
Specific		
Measurable		
Achievable		
Relevant		
Time-bound		
Evidence-based		
Adaptable		

B. Build the 90-Day Plan

Period	Milestone	Priority actions	Evidence or indicator
Days 1–30			
Days 31–60			
Days 61–90			

C. Weekly Action Schedule

Action area	Weekly commitment	When scheduled	Record of completion
Occupational and employer research			
Skill and evidence development			
Networking and communication			
Targeted applications and follow-up			
Review and adjustment			

D. Barriers and Contingencies

Likely barrier	Early warning sign	Planned response	Support or resource
1.			
2.			
3.			

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

1. Which is the strongest employment goal?

- A. Find a good job soon.
- B. Apply everywhere every day.
- C. Become competitive for specified entry-level roles through a verified 90-day plan.
- D. Receive an offer next Friday.

2. Which outcome is fully under the learner's control?

- A. An employer's interview decision.
- B. The quality and completion of a targeted application.
- C. The number of available openings.
- D. A hiring manager's timetable.

3. Why include result indicators?

- A. To guarantee an offer.
- B. To observe how the market responds and determine whether strategy needs adjustment.
- C. To replace action tracking.
- D. To compare applicants publicly.

4. What makes a goal achievable?

- A. It requires no effort.
- B. It matches evidence, constraints, resources, and a workable next step.
- C. It guarantees the final outcome.
- D. It uses an ambitious title.

5. When should a learner revise the plan?

- A. Whenever one action feels difficult.
- B. Only after obtaining a job.
- C. At established review points or when meaningful new evidence changes feasibility.
- D. Every day without explanation.

6. Which is a development goal?

- A. Improve spreadsheet tracking and produce a reviewed work sample.
- B. Receive three interviews.
- C. Make an employer hire me.
- D. Wait for a suitable opening.

7. What is an appropriate AI role?

- A. Predicting the date of an offer.
- B. Inventing accomplishments to close gaps.
- C. Organizing verified commitments into possible milestones for review.
- D. Sending unreviewed applications.

8. What is the final product of this unit?

- A. A guaranteed employment contract.
- B. A Career Goal and 90-Day Action Plan.
- C. A permanent decision that cannot change.

D. A list of motivational statements.

Answer Feedback

- 1 C. A useful goal defines a target, evidence, actions, and review period without promising an employer-controlled outcome.
- 2 B. The learner controls whether the application is accurate, targeted, complete, and submitted on time.
- 3 B. Result indicators reveal whether the current strategy is producing meaningful employer response.
- 4 B. Achievability depends on evidence and workable conditions, not on ease or certainty.
- 5 C. Planned reviews prevent impulsive changes while allowing evidence-based adaptation.
- 6 A. A development goal strengthens a capability and creates evidence under the learner's control.
- 7 C. AI may organize a plan based on verified input; the learner remains responsible for decisions and accuracy.
- 8 B. The portfolio product records the goal, milestones, actions, indicators, barriers, and review process.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ My goal identifies a primary role and a credible related alternative.
- ☐ The goal reflects my needs, constraints, qualifications, and career direction.
- ☐ I used occupational information and current openings to test feasibility.
- ☐ I separated actions I control from results I can only influence.
- ☐ The plan includes clear milestones for days 30, 60, and 90.
- ☐ Weekly actions include research, development, networking, applications, and review.
- ☐ Each development priority produces evidence relevant to the target job.
- ☐ I identified likely barriers and realistic contingency responses.
- ☐ I established action and result indicators and a method for recording them.
- ☐ A reviewer examined the goal and I recorded justified revisions.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Career Goal and 90-Day Action Plan containing:

- the career direction, primary target, and realistic alternative;
- the completed seven-question goal test;
- the final 90-day employment goal;
- 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones;
- a weekly action schedule;
- action and result indicators;
- anticipated barriers and contingency responses;
- review dates and the person or service that will provide feedback;
- a short decision record explaining any later change to the target or strategy.

Career Goal Template

'During the next 90 days, I will prepare and compete for _____ positions in _____. I will demonstrate readiness by completing _____, strengthening _____, and carrying out _____ each week. I will

review action and result evidence on _____ and adjust _____
when the evidence indicates that a change is needed.'

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Career exploration and job-search resources. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

O*NET OnLine. Occupational requirements and related occupations. <https://www.onetonline.org/>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined.

<https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

Part I Completion Review

Part I has moved from diagnosis to direction, evidence, and action. Before proceeding to the strategic job search plan, review the four portfolio products together. They should tell one consistent story: what you can demonstrate now, which work you are targeting, how your experience supports that target, what must be strengthened, and what you will do during the next 90 days.

Unit	Portfolio product	Consistency question
1	Career Readiness Profile	Do the ratings and priorities reflect actual evidence and target-job requirements?
2	Target Career Decision Brief	Does the selected direction fit interests, needs, evidence, and opportunity?
3	Skills Translation and Evidence Map	Can each priority claim be demonstrated and explained in employer language?
4	Career Goal and 90-Day Action Plan	Do milestones and weekly actions address the target and the most important gaps?

Part I Readiness Check

- ☐ The same primary target and related titles appear across all four products.
- ☐ My skill claims are supported by evidence rather than adjectives alone.
- ☐ My development priorities address requirements that matter to the target job.
- ☐ My goal respects practical needs and constraints without abandoning growth.
- ☐ My 90-day plan contains scheduled actions, evidence products, and review dates.
- ☐ I can explain what changed in my thinking during Part I and why.

When these statements are true, organize the four products in your digital career folder and proceed to Part II: Develop Your Strategic Job Search Plan.

Part II: Develop Your Strategic Job Search Plan



Part I helped the learner identify a realistic direction and assemble evidence of readiness. Part II turns that direction into a disciplined search strategy. A productive job search is not simply a repeated effort to find advertisements and submit applications. It is a continuing process of researching the labor market, selecting credible employers and opportunities, communicating with people, using digital tools responsibly, and adjusting decisions when evidence changes.

Part II will guide the learner through five connected tasks:

Unit 1. Research Occupations Employers and Opportunities

Unit 2. Build a Professional Digital Identity

Unit 3. Use Networking and Digital Communication

Unit 4. Use AI to Support a Focused Job Search

Unit 5. Prepare a 90-Day Job Search Action Plan

The learner should continue using the career folder started in Part I. Each unit will add a practical product that supports later resume writing, applications, interviews, and career decisions.

Opening Reflection

Before beginning Part II, consider the following questions:

- Where do I currently look for occupational and employment information?
- How do I decide whether a job posting is accurate, current, and appropriate for me?
- What do I know about the employers connected to my target work?
- Which people, organizations, or professional groups could help me learn about opportunities?
- How will I record search actions and judge whether the strategy is working?

Write a short response in the career folder. This initial reflection will provide a point of comparison when Part II is completed.

Personal Learning Goal

Complete the statement: 'During Part II, I want to improve my ability to _____ so that I can conduct a more focused, informed, and responsible job search.'

Unit 1. Research Occupations Employers and Opportunities

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

The purpose of this unit is to help the learner investigate a target occupation, identify credible employers and opportunities, and convert scattered information into a usable search plan.

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- identify reliable sources of occupational, employer, and job-opening information;
- compare a target occupation across duties, qualifications, working conditions, pay, and outlook;
- research an employer's purpose, services, structure, location, hiring practices, and current needs;
- analyze job postings for required qualifications, preferred qualifications, recurring language, and evidence expectations;
- verify opportunities and identify warning signs associated with misleading or fraudulent postings;
- organize findings in an occupational and employer research record; and
- use the findings to select priority employers, search terms, and next actions.

2. Why This Competency Matters

A job title alone does not reveal enough to guide a career decision or an application. The same title may involve different duties, technologies, schedules, qualifications, and levels of responsibility across organizations. An opening that appears attractive may be unsuitable because of location, working conditions, compensation, eligibility requirements, or limited opportunity for growth. Conversely, a related title that the learner has not considered may provide a realistic entry point into the desired field.

Research reduces guesswork. It helps the learner understand how an occupation is described in the labor market, determine what employers actually request, and decide where limited time should be invested. It also provides the language and evidence needed later for resumes, applications, networking, and interviews.

3. Essential Information and Research

Effective research moves through three connected levels: occupation, employer, and opportunity. Each level answers a different question.

Research level	Guiding question	Evidence to collect
Occupation	What does this type of work usually require?	Duties, knowledge, skills, education, technologies, work context, wages, and outlook
Employer	How does this organization perform the work?	Purpose, products or services, size, locations, structure, culture evidence, recent activity, and hiring channels
Opportunity	What does this specific opening require and offer?	Tasks, minimum and preferred qualifications, schedule, location, compensation when stated, application method, deadline, and contact information

➤ Use a Source Verification Ladder

No single website should control an important employment decision. Begin with authoritative occupational information, continue with the employer's own materials, and then compare several current openings. Use the following order as a practical verification ladder:

- Government or recognized occupational databases for broad occupational patterns.
- The employer's official website, career page, annual reports, public notices, and verified professional accounts.
- Current job postings on the employer's own site and established employment platforms.
- Professional associations, licensing bodies, educational institutions, workforce agencies, and local labor-market sources.
- Conversations with employees, alumni, instructors, workforce specialists, or professional contacts who can provide context.

Information from informal posts, automated summaries, discussion boards, or AI systems may suggest questions and search terms, but it should be verified before it becomes the basis for a decision.

➤ Read Job Postings as Evidence

A job posting is both an invitation and a description of an employer's immediate problem. Read it more than once. On the first reading, decide whether the opportunity is generally relevant. On the second, separate required qualifications from preferred qualifications. On the third, identify repeated duties, technologies, action verbs, and evidence the employer may expect. Record uncertainties rather than filling them with assumptions.

Posting element	What to examine	How it informs the search
Job title and department	Related titles, level, reporting area	Expands search terms and clarifies organizational location
Responsibilities	Frequent tasks, priorities, people served	Identifies the work and evidence to emphasize
Required qualifications	Education, experience, skills, licenses, eligibility	Shows minimum screening conditions
Preferred qualifications	Additional tools, experience, or credentials	Reveals competitive advantages and development needs
Work conditions	Location, schedule, travel, physical or technical conditions	Tests feasibility against personal constraints
Application instructions	Documents, questions, deadline, official channel	Prevents incomplete or misdirected applications

➤ Investigate the Employer Not Just the Vacancy

Employer research should answer whether the organization is credible, whether its work aligns with the learner's direction, and whether the learner can explain a genuine reason for applying. Look for evidence of what the organization does, whom it serves, how the target role contributes, and what changes may be affecting its work. Avoid claiming to know an employer's culture from promotional language alone. Culture is better treated as a question to investigate through several sources and later conversations.

➤ Protect Yourself During the Search

A credible employer normally provides an identifiable organization, a verifiable vacancy, and a traceable application process. Warning signs include requests for money, gift cards, banking information, or sensitive identity documents before a legitimate hiring process; interviews conducted only through an unfamiliar messaging service; unusually high pay for vague work; pressure to act immediately; mismatched email domains; and job descriptions copied from another employer. Verify

the opening on the employer's official website and contact the organization through independently located information when doubt remains.

Because hiring practices and legal requirements differ across countries, learners outside the United States should also consult their national employment service, labor ministry, professional licensing authority, and local consumer-protection agency.

4. Realistic Example

Leila's primary target is an entry-level project coordinator role, with operations assistant as a related alternative. She begins by reviewing occupational sources and learns that employers may use several related titles, including project assistant, program coordinator, implementation coordinator, and operations coordinator. She records common tasks such as maintaining schedules, preparing status information, organizing documents, following up on assignments, and communicating with team members.

She then studies eight current postings from four employers. Spreadsheet use appears in six postings, project-management software in five, written status reporting in five, and meeting coordination in four. Two positions require experience she cannot yet demonstrate, three are outside her commuting limit, and one posting appears on a general job site but not on the employer's official career page. She removes those six from immediate consideration rather than applying without judgment.

The remaining two opportunities are feasible. Leila selects one as a high-priority opening and the other as an employer to monitor. Her research also reveals a development need: she should create evidence that she can prepare a concise project-status report. This becomes a scheduled activity in her 90-day plan.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

The following process demonstrates how Leila converts a broad occupational interest into a focused research record.

Step	Action	Leila's evidence
1	Define the research question	Which entry-level coordination roles fit her evidence and practical constraints?
2	Establish occupation-level facts	Common duties, related titles, education, skills, technologies, work context, and outlook
3	Build search vocabulary	Project assistant, project coordinator, program coordinator, operations coordinator
4	Identify possible employers	Organizations within the approved area or offering verified hybrid arrangements
5	Study current postings	Eight postings coded for duties, requirements, technologies, conditions, and application instructions
6	Verify the opportunities	Employer career pages, matching domains, dates, and official application channels checked

Step	Action	Leila's evidence
7	Compare fit and gaps	Strong evidence for organization and follow-up; development needed in status reporting and project software
8	Choose the next action	Prioritize one opening, monitor one employer, complete a status-report sample, and revise search alerts

Demonstration from Posting Language to Search Evidence

Posting language	Meaning to verify	Possible evidence or action
Maintain project schedules	Level of scheduling responsibility and software used	Shared course-project schedule and a new practice schedule
Communicate project status	Audience, frequency, and expected format	Weekly course updates and a newly prepared one-page status report
Coordinate meetings	Scheduling, agendas, notes, or follow-up required	Team meeting records; practice with agenda and action-item log
Experience with project tools preferred	Which platform and what tasks must be performed	Complete a guided practice project and preserve screenshots or an export

6. Digital and AI Applications

Digital tools can accelerate research when the learner remains responsible for verification. Useful applications include occupational databases, employer career pages, professional networks, job-alert services, spreadsheets, bookmarking tools, and calendar reminders. A simple research log is more valuable than dozens of unorganized browser tabs.

AI can help group similar job titles, compare recurring terms across postings, summarize verified notes, or generate questions for further investigation. It should not invent employer facts, decide that a questionable opening is safe, or send an application without review. Do not enter Social Security numbers, banking information, confidential employer material, protected records, or other sensitive personal information into a public AI system.

Sample prompt

'I am researching entry-level project coordination work. Using only the occupational notes and anonymized posting excerpts I provide, create a comparison table with these headings: recurring duties, required qualifications, preferred qualifications, digital tools, working conditions, and questions requiring verification. Do not invent missing information. Label every unsupported conclusion as a question for further research.'

After receiving the output, compare every important statement with the original source. Correct errors, restore context that was omitted, and record the source and date beside the verified information.

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Establish the Occupational Baseline

Research the primary target occupation and one related alternative. Record the following information for each:

- common and related job titles;
- principal duties and people served;
- knowledge, skills, digital tools, education, credentials, and experience;
- work setting, schedule, travel, physical demands, and other conditions;
- typical pay information and employment outlook, with location and date;
- entry routes and realistic advancement possibilities; and
- sources consulted and questions still unanswered.

B. Build an Employer Research List

Identify at least five employers connected to the target work. Include organizations of different sizes or sectors when appropriate. For each employer, record its official website, purpose, services or products, location or work arrangement, target department, official career page, recent relevant activity, and one reason it may or may not fit the learner's direction.

C. Analyze Current Opportunities

Collect five to ten current postings representing the primary target and closely related titles. Remove personal contact information before entering excerpts into an AI system. Code each posting using the following record.

Field	Research entry
Employer and official link	
Job title department and location	
Date found and closing date	
Principal responsibilities	
Required qualifications	
Preferred qualifications	
Digital tools or systems	
Compensation and conditions stated	
Evidence I can provide	
Gaps or questions	
Verification completed	
Decision and next action	

D. Select Priority Employers and Search Terms

Use the evidence to select three to five priority employers and a manageable group of job titles or keywords. Explain each selection. Establish alerts only after refining the terms, location, work arrangement, and experience level so the results remain useful.

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

Select the best answer for each question.

1. Why should occupational research be completed before relying on individual job postings?

- A. Occupational sources guarantee that every employer uses the same title.
- B. Occupational sources establish a broader baseline for comparing employer-specific requirements.
- C. Occupational sources eliminate the need to study employers.
- D. Occupational sources tell the learner which offer to accept.

2. Which source provides the strongest confirmation that a specific vacancy is active?

- A. An anonymous repost
- B. An AI-generated summary
- C. The employer's official career page or confirmed hiring contact
- D. A discussion-board comment

3. A preferred qualification appears in several postings but the learner does not have it. What is the best response?

- A. Claim equivalent experience without evidence.
- B. Ignore the pattern because it is not required.
- C. Record it as a possible competitive gap and investigate a realistic development activity.
- D. Abandon the occupation immediately.

4. What is the best use of recurring language across several job postings?

- A. Copy entire sentences into every application.
- B. Identify common employer needs and connect them to truthful evidence.
- C. Assume every organization defines the work identically.
- D. Increase the number of untargeted applications.

5. Which action best protects a job seeker from a questionable posting?

- A. Send banking information to show commitment.
- B. Continue if the salary is unusually high.
- C. Verify the vacancy through independently located official employer information.
- D. Trust the posting when it includes a recognizable logo.

6. Why should the source and date be recorded with labor-market information?

- A. To make the research record longer.
- B. To distinguish current verified evidence from information that may become outdated.
- C. To prevent comparison among employers.
- D. To allow AI to make the final decision.

7. Which AI use is most responsible in this unit?

- A. Asking AI to confirm an employer without checking a source.
- B. Providing confidential documents so AI can decide whether to apply.
- C. Asking AI to organize anonymized verified notes and label missing facts as questions.
- D. Allowing AI to submit every matching application automatically.

8. What should the unit's portfolio product accomplish?

- A. Preserve every advertisement found online.
- B. Convert research into priority employers, search terms, evidence needs, and next actions.
- C. Predict the exact date of employment.
- D. Replace the career goal developed in Part I.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. Occupation-level evidence provides a baseline against which titles and requirements from individual employers can be interpreted.
- 2 C. A vacancy should be confirmed through the employer's official channel or a verified hiring contact.
- 3 C. A recurring preference may affect competitiveness and should become a research or development priority rather than a false claim.
- 4 B. Recurring language helps reveal common needs, but application statements must remain truthful and supported by the learner's evidence.
- 5 C. Logos and polished messages can be copied. Independent verification through official contact information is more reliable.
- 6 B. Labor-market facts and openings change; a source and date make later review possible.
- 7 C. AI is useful for organizing supplied information when missing facts remain clearly identified and important outputs are verified.
- 8 B. The product should guide decisions and action, not merely accumulate information.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I researched the primary occupation and at least one related alternative.
- ☐ I used authoritative occupational sources and recorded the source and date.
- ☐ I identified related job titles and useful search terms.
- ☐ I researched at least five employers through official and independent sources.
- ☐ I analyzed five to ten current postings for duties, qualifications, tools, and conditions.
- ☐ I separated required qualifications from preferred qualifications.
- ☐ I connected employer requirements to evidence I can honestly provide.
- ☐ I recorded gaps and questions instead of making assumptions.
- ☐ I verified priority opportunities through official employer channels.
- ☐ I selected priority employers, search terms, and next actions based on evidence.
- ☐ A reviewer examined the research record and I recorded justified revisions.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add an Occupational Employer and Opportunity Research Record containing:

- an occupational profile for the primary target and one related alternative;
- a list of related job titles and search terms;

- research profiles for at least five possible employers;
- an analysis of five to ten current job postings;
- a record of sources, dates, and verification actions;
- a comparison of employer requirements with verified personal evidence;
- a list of gaps, unanswered questions, and development priorities;
- three to five priority employers or opportunity channels; and
- the next three research or application actions with completion dates.

Occupational Employer and Opportunity Research Summary

Decision area	Evidence based conclusion	Next action and date
Primary occupation and related titles		
Priority employers		
Recurring employer requirements		
Strongest supporting evidence		
Important gaps or questions		
Verified opportunities or channels		

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Career exploration, occupation profiles, job-search resources, and local assistance. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Federal Trade Commission. Guidance on recognizing and reporting job scams. <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/job-scams>

O*NET OnLine. Occupational tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities, and technology information. <https://www.onetonline.org/>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

For locations outside the United States, consult the applicable national employment service, labor ministry, occupational classification system, professional body, and consumer-protection authority.

Unit 2. Build a Professional Digital Identity

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

The purpose of this unit is to help the learner create, examine, and maintain a truthful professional identity across digital environments. A professional digital identity should make the learner easier to understand and verify while protecting privacy and avoiding claims that cannot be supported.

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain how search results, profiles, messages, and portfolio evidence shape professional identity;
- audit public digital information from an employer's perspective;
- write a concise professional headline and summary aligned with the target career;
- select evidence that demonstrates qualifications without disclosing confidential information;
- apply privacy, security, accessibility, and accuracy safeguards;
- align professional information across appropriate platforms; and
- prepare a Digital Professional Identity Profile for the career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

Employers, clients, collaborators, and professional contacts may encounter a person online before meeting that person. They may see a profile, portfolio, presentation, comment, email address, or search result. These traces do not replace formal qualifications, but they influence whether the person appears credible, relevant, and prepared.

A strong digital identity is not a performance of perfection. It is a consistent and verifiable account of career direction, capabilities, evidence, and professional conduct. The learner should control what can reasonably be controlled, correct inaccurate or outdated information when possible, and avoid sacrificing personal privacy for visibility.

3. Essential Information and Research

- **Use the Five-Part Identity Test**

Element	Guiding question	Acceptable evidence
Direction	Is the target work immediately clear?	Headline, role family, field, location or work arrangement when relevant
Relevance	Does the information address employer needs?	Skills, keywords, projects, credentials, and achievements tied to the target
Evidence	Can important claims be verified?	Work samples, results, credentials, recommendations, presentations, or documented projects
Consistency	Do appropriate platforms tell the same basic story?	Aligned dates, titles, education, contact information, and career focus
Responsibility	Is the identity accurate, respectful, secure, and appropriately private?	Verified claims, permissions, privacy settings, accessible files, and secure accounts

- **Separate Professional Visibility from Personal Exposure**

Professional visibility means making relevant qualifications and evidence appropriately discoverable. Personal exposure means releasing information that is unnecessary for a career purpose or creates avoidable risk. A profile may identify a general location without publishing a home address. A portfolio may describe a project without revealing protected student, patient, customer, employer, or

organizational information. Contact information should support legitimate communication without exposing sensitive accounts.

- **Build Evidence Before Promotion**

A profile becomes persuasive when claims lead to evidence. “Strong communicator” is weak by itself. A project summary, presentation, report, or verified result allows the reader to judge the claim. Evidence should be selected for relevance and explained through the situation, action, result, and learner contribution. Permission must be obtained before displaying work that belongs to another person or organization.

- **Control Accuracy and Security**

The learner should use a professional email address, unique passwords, multifactor authentication, current recovery information, and platform privacy controls. Public information should be reviewed periodically. AI-generated portraits, biographies, achievements, or work samples must not create a misleading identity. Accessibility also matters: use readable contrast, descriptive link text, captions or transcripts when appropriate, and documents that can be opened without unnecessary barriers.

4. Realistic Example

Leila searches her name using a private browser window and reviews the first pages of results. She finds an inactive student-club profile, a public social account, and a course presentation uploaded without explanation. None is harmful, but together they do not communicate her project-coordination direction. Her professional profile also lists software without showing how she used it.

Leila writes a focused headline: “Entry-Level Project Coordinator | Scheduling, Team Communication, and Spreadsheet Tracking.” She revises her summary to describe the type of work she seeks, two supported capabilities, and the evidence available in her portfolio. She adds a project schedule and status-report sample after removing classmates’ personal information and obtaining permission. She tightens privacy settings on personal accounts and enables multifactor authentication on professional accounts.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

Step	Action	Leila’s decision or evidence
1	Define the intended professional audience	Project and operations employers, alumni, instructors, and workforce contacts
2	Search and inventory the current identity	Profiles, search results, public posts, portfolio links, usernames, and contact information
3	Classify each item	Keep, revise, make private, request correction, document, or monitor
4	Write the core identity statement	Target role plus three supported capabilities and a truthful value statement
5	Select evidence	Schedule, status report, spreadsheet tracker, presentation, and relevant feedback
6	Align appropriate platforms	Consistent titles, dates, contact details, target direction, and evidence links

Step	Action	Leila's decision or evidence
7	Test usability and access	Links, mobile view, spelling, contrast, file permissions, and download behavior
8	Secure and schedule review	Multifactor authentication, recovery information, and a monthly review date

Demonstration from Claim to Digital Evidence

Profile claim	Evidence link or explanation	Verification question
Organizes project work	Four-week schedule with milestones and responsibilities	Does the artifact show Leila's actual contribution?
Communicates progress	One-page status report and two course updates	Is confidential or identifying information removed?
Uses spreadsheets	Expense and task tracker with formulas explained	Can Leila describe what she built and why?
Collaborates responsibly	Project reflection and instructor feedback	Is permission available for shared material?

6. Digital and AI Applications

Digital tools can support a professional profile, portfolio, personal website, document repository, search-result audit, link checker, accessibility check, and account-security review. The learner does not need to use every platform. Each platform should have a defined audience and purpose.

AI may help compare a draft profile with verified target-job language, identify unsupported claims, suggest clearer organization, or test whether the career direction is understandable. The learner must verify every statement and retain an authentic voice. AI should not fabricate employment, credentials, recommendations, photographs, results, or work samples.

Sample prompt

"Review the professional headline, summary, and evidence list I provide for an entry-level project coordinator role. Identify unclear wording, unsupported claims, missing evidence, unnecessary personal information, and inconsistencies. Suggest revisions using only my verified information. Do not invent qualifications, results, or experience."

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Conduct a Digital Identity Audit

Search your name and relevant usernames from a signed-out or private browser. Review professional profiles, public social accounts, images, portfolio items, publications, and old organizational pages. Record only what is necessary for the audit; do not copy sensitive personal information into the worksheet.

Item or location	Intended audience	Finding	Action	Review date

B. Draft the Core Professional Identity

Complete these statements:

My target role or field is _____.

The three capabilities most relevant to that target are _____.

My strongest supporting evidence is _____.

A truthful professional headline is _____.

My 75- to 120-word professional summary is _____.

C. Build and Test the Evidence Map

Employer need or profile claim	Evidence	My contribution	Permission/privacy check	Link tested

D. Complete the Consistency and Security Review

Compare names, dates, titles, education, target direction, contact information, and evidence links across appropriate professional platforms. Test the profile on a computer and phone. Confirm privacy settings, unique passwords, multifactor authentication, recovery information, file permissions, and accessibility features.

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

Select the best answer for each question.

1. What is the main purpose of a professional digital identity?

- A. To publish as much personal information as possible.
- B. To provide a truthful, relevant, and verifiable account of professional direction and evidence.
- C. To replace qualifications with attractive design.
- D. To appear on every available platform.

2. Which statement provides the strongest evidence?

- A. Excellent communicator.
- B. Hardworking professional.
- C. Prepared weekly status summaries that helped a five-person team meet a project deadline.
- D. Skilled in everything employers need.

3. What should be done with confidential material from a project?

- A. Publish it because it proves experience.
- B. Remove protected information and obtain permission before any appropriate use.
- C. Upload it to an AI system for rewriting.
- D. Hide only the organization's name.

4. Which action best improves account security?

- A. Reusing a memorable password.
- B. Sharing recovery codes with contacts.
- C. Using unique passwords and multifactor authentication.
- D. Keeping every account public.

5. What is a responsible use of AI?

- A. Inventing an accomplishment to strengthen a profile.
- B. Creating a recommendation in another person's name.
- C. Identifying unclear language while using only verified information.
- D. Generating an artificial employer reference.

6. Why should platforms be consistent?

- A. Every platform must contain identical personal content.
- B. Important professional facts should not contradict one another.
- C. Personal and professional audiences are always the same.
- D. Consistency guarantees employment.

7. What does professional visibility require?

- A. Publishing a home address.
- B. Making relevant qualifications discoverable while protecting unnecessary personal information.
- C. Accepting every connection request.
- D. Removing all personal boundaries.

8. What should the portfolio product demonstrate?

- A. The number of accounts created.
- B. A coherent identity supported by tested evidence, privacy safeguards, and a review plan.

- C. A promise of employer approval.
- D. A complete record of private activity.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. The identity should communicate direction, relevance, evidence, consistency, and responsibility.
- 2 C. A specific action, context, and result provide stronger evidence than adjectives.
- 3 B. Confidentiality, ownership, and permission must be addressed before publication.
- 4 C. Unique passwords and multifactor authentication reduce avoidable account risk.
- 5 C. AI may help improve wording, but the learner remains responsible for truth and verification.
- 6 B. Dates, titles, credentials, and career direction should not create avoidable contradictions.
- 7 B. Visibility should serve a professional purpose without unnecessary exposure.
- 8 B. The product should connect a truthful identity to evidence, safeguards, and continuing review.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ My target role or field is immediately understandable.
- ☐ My headline and summary use verified information.
- ☐ Important capability claims lead to relevant evidence.
- ☐ Dates, titles, education, and contact information are consistent.
- ☐ I removed or protected confidential and unnecessary personal information.
- ☐ I obtained permission for work that involves other people or organizations.
- ☐ Professional links and file permissions work on computer and mobile devices.
- ☐ The content uses readable contrast, meaningful links, and appropriate captions or descriptions.
- ☐ Professional accounts use unique passwords and multifactor authentication.
- ☐ I established a schedule for reviewing and updating the identity.
- ☐ A reviewer examined the profile and I recorded justified revisions.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Digital Professional Identity Profile containing:

- the target audience and career direction;
- a professional headline and 75- to 120-word summary;
- three to five verified capability statements;
- an evidence map connecting each important claim to an artifact or result;
- a record of consistency, privacy, permission, security, accessibility, and link checks;
- screenshots or exports of appropriate professional profiles; and
- a scheduled review date and revision record.

Digital Professional Identity Summary

Identity element	Final entry	Evidence or verification
Target audience and role		
Professional headline		
Core capabilities		

Identity element	Final entry	Evidence or verification
Primary evidence links		
Privacy and permission actions		
Security and accessibility checks		
Next review date		

Research Sources for This Unit

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. More Than a Password and multifactor authentication guidance. <https://www.cisa.gov/mfa>

Federal Trade Commission. Identity theft and online security guidance. <https://consumer.ftc.gov/identity-theft-and-online-security>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined. <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable privacy, data-protection, employment, and consumer-protection authorities.

Unit 3. Use Networking and Digital Communication

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

The purpose of this unit is to help the learner build professional relationships and communicate about career interests with clarity, respect, and purpose. Networking is treated as a continuing exchange of information and support rather than a request for special treatment or an immediate job.

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- identify existing and potential professional contacts;
- distinguish relationship building from asking strangers for employment;
- write appropriate introduction, information-request, follow-up, and thank-you messages;
- conduct and document an informational conversation;
- participate responsibly in professional groups and digital communities;
- protect privacy and identify suspicious outreach; and
- prepare a Networking and Communication Plan for the career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

Job postings reveal only part of the labor market. Conversations with instructors, alumni, coworkers, professional associations, workforce specialists, and community contacts can help a learner understand roles, employers, terminology, hiring processes, and emerging needs. A contact may provide information or introduce another person, but no contact owes the learner a job or recommendation.

The quality of communication affects whether a relationship can develop. Generic mass messages, immediate requests for favors, repeated follow-ups, and inaccurate claims weaken trust. Focused questions, appropriate timing, careful listening, gratitude, and responsible follow-through make the interaction useful to both people.

3. Essential Information and Research

➤ Use the Relationship Development Cycle

Stage	Purpose	Appropriate action
Prepare	Understand the person, organization, and reason for contact	Review reliable information and define one realistic request
Connect	Introduce yourself and establish relevance	Mention a genuine connection, shared interest, event, or referral
Learn	Seek perspective rather than demand access	Ask focused questions and listen carefully
Follow through	Honor commitments and show appreciation	Send thanks, complete promised actions, and record learning
Maintain	Continue a professional relationship over time	Share a relevant update, congratulate an achievement, or offer appropriate help

➤ Build from the Network You Already Have

A professional network often begins with people already connected to the learner's education, work, service, family, or community. The learner should identify who knows the target field, who knows the learner's work, and who may suggest another source. Personal relationships should not be used carelessly; permission is required before naming a person as a referral or reference.

➤ **Match the Message to the Purpose**

Message	Primary purpose	Essential elements
Introduction	Establish a relevant professional connection	Identity, shared context, target interest, and modest next step
Information request	Learn about work, an employer, or a pathway	Specific request, reasonable time, and no assumption of obligation
Follow-up	Confirm an action or keep a useful connection active	Context, concise update, promised item, or respectful reminder
Thank-you	Recognize time, information, or assistance	Specific appreciation, one useful learning point, and any agreed next step
Referral request	Ask whether another conversation may be appropriate	Reason, permission to use the contact's name, and freedom to decline

➤ **Apply Professional Communication Standards**

Use a clear subject line, appropriate greeting, concise paragraphs, accurate names and titles, and a complete signature. Select the channel the recipient normally uses for professional communication. Respect time zones, language differences, accessibility needs, and cultural expectations. One carefully timed reminder may be appropriate; repeated unanswered messages are not.

➤ **Protect Trust and Safety**

Confirm unexpected contacts through independent information, especially when a message requests money, credentials, identification documents, account access, or movement to an unfamiliar platform. Do not publish another person's contact information, conversation, or advice without permission. Keep a private record of contacts and commitments rather than exposing the network publicly.

4. Realistic Example

Leila lists instructors, classmates, former supervisors, relatives, community contacts, and alumni connected to project or operations work. She selects Professor Martin, who reviewed her team project, and an alumna who works as an operations coordinator. Instead of asking either person for a job, Leila asks Professor Martin whether he would review her evidence summary and asks the alumna for a 20-minute informational conversation about entry-level coordination work.

The alumna agrees. Leila prepares five questions, listens without recording unless permission is granted, and learns that concise status reporting and dependable follow-up are especially important. She sends a thank-you message within one day, completes the suggested software practice, and provides a brief update three weeks later. The interaction produces learning and a continuing relationship, not a promise of employment.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

Step	Leila's action	Evidence
1	Define the purpose	Learn how entry-level coordinators demonstrate readiness
2	Select an appropriate contact	Alumna in a related role with a genuine institutional connection
3	Research before contacting	Role, organization, public professional information, and shared connection

Step	Leila's action	Evidence
4	Write a focused request	Brief introduction and request for a 20-minute conversation
5	Prepare questions	Duties, entry path, tools, evidence, and advice for preparation
6	Conduct the conversation	Listen, take permitted notes, respect time, and avoid asking for a job
7	Follow up	Specific thank-you and completion of the agreed action
8	Maintain responsibly	Relevant update after progress, without repeated demands

Sample Informational Conversation Request

Subject: Midtown Regional University alumna seeking perspective on project coordination

Dear Ms. Davis, Professor Martin suggested that I contact you because I am preparing for entry-level project coordination work. I have been studying how coordinators manage schedules, status information, and team follow-up. If your schedule permits, would you be willing to speak with me for approximately 20 minutes about the transition into this work and the evidence new candidates should prepare? I understand if you are unavailable. Thank you for considering my request. Sincerely, Leila LouMeena

6. Digital and AI Applications

Digital tools may help maintain a private contact record, schedule reminders, join professional events, test links, and conduct video conversations. AI may help shorten a draft message, compare its tone with the stated purpose, identify vague questions, or create a practice role-play. The learner must verify names, facts, and commitments and must never allow AI to send messages, impersonate a contact, invent a referral, or fabricate a relationship.

Sample prompt

"Review this networking message for clarity, respect, and a reasonable request. Use only the facts I provide. Identify any language that sounds demanding, generic, overly familiar, or misleading. Suggest a concise revision and explain what I must verify before sending it."

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Map the Current and Potential Network

Contact or group	Connection	What I may learn	Appropriate request	Next action/date

B. Prepare an Informational Conversation

Purpose of the conversation: _____.

What I verified about the person or organization: _____.

Five focused questions: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____.

Time requested and communication channel: _____.

Privacy, accessibility, language, or time-zone consideration: _____.

C. Record Learning and Follow-Through

Date/contact	Important learning	Source or verification	Action promised	Follow-up completed

D. Practice and Receive Feedback

Ask a reviewer to examine one introduction, one information request, and one thank-you message. Revise for accuracy, purpose, tone, concision, accessibility, and a clear next step. Preserve the original and revised versions in the career folder.

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

Select the best answer for each question.

1. What is the most useful purpose of networking?

- A. Obtaining favors from strangers.
- B. Building relationships through learning, contribution, and responsible follow-through.
- C. Collecting the largest number of contacts.
- D. Avoiding occupational research.

2. Which request is most appropriate for a new contact?

- A. Please refer me immediately.
- B. Can you guarantee an interview?
- C. Would you be willing to discuss your transition into this field for 20 minutes?
- D. Please send your organization's private hiring list.

3. What should a learner do before naming a referral?

- A. Assume permission.
- B. Obtain the person's permission.
- C. Add the name to every application.
- D. Ask AI to write the relationship.

4. What is the best follow-up after an informational conversation?

- A. A specific thank-you and completion of any promised action.

- B. Daily messages asking about vacancies.
- C. Publishing the conversation.
- D. Adding the person as a reference without asking.

5. When is a reminder appropriate?

- A. Repeatedly until the person answers.
- B. Once, after a reasonable interval and with respectful wording.
- C. Immediately after the first message.
- D. Only through a personal account.

6. Which AI use is responsible?

- A. Inventing a shared connection.
- B. Sending messages without review.
- C. Reviewing a truthful draft for clarity and tone.
- D. Impersonating the recipient for public display.

7. What protects a professional network?

- A. Publishing all contact details.
- B. Keeping a private record and sharing information only with permission.
- C. Recording every call secretly.
- D. Accepting every unexpected invitation.

8. What should the portfolio product show?

- A. Contact quantity only.
- B. Purposeful contacts, appropriate messages, verified learning, follow-through, and a maintenance plan.
- C. Guaranteed referrals.
- D. Private conversations in full.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. Networking develops professional relationships through reciprocal learning and responsible action.
- 2 C. A focused, time-limited request for perspective respects the contact's role and choice.
- 3 B. A person's name should not be used as a referral without permission.
- 4 A. Specific appreciation and reliable follow-through strengthen trust.
- 5 B. One respectful reminder after a reasonable interval is normally sufficient.
- 6 C. AI may improve a verified draft, but it must not invent or impersonate.
- 7 B. Contact information and conversations require privacy and permission.
- 8 B. The product should document purposeful communication, learning, action, and maintenance.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I identified existing contacts before approaching strangers.
- ☐ Each contact has a clear and appropriate purpose.
- ☐ I researched the person or organization before making contact.
- ☐ My messages use accurate names, titles, facts, and connection information.
- ☐ Requests are specific, reasonable, and easy to decline.
- ☐ I prepared focused questions and respected the agreed time.

- ☐ I obtained permission before using a referral, recording, or sharing information.
- ☐ I completed promised actions and sent specific thanks.
- ☐ I protected contact information and verified unexpected outreach.
- ☐ AI-supported wording remains truthful and personally reviewed.
- ☐ I scheduled appropriate relationship-maintenance actions.
- ☐ A reviewer examined my messages and I recorded justified revisions.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Networking and Digital Communication Plan containing:

- a map of current and potential contacts;
- the purpose and appropriate request for each priority contact;
- one revised introduction, information-request, follow-up, and thank-you message;
- questions and notes from at least one informational conversation;
- a record of permissions, commitments, follow-through, and verified learning;
- privacy and safety checks; and
- a 30-day relationship-development schedule.

Networking and Communication Summary

Priority relationship	Purpose	Next communication	Evidence/action	Review date

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Networking and job-search resources.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/networking.aspx>

Federal Trade Commission. Job-scam and online-security guidance.

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/job-scams>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined.

<https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable employment, privacy, and consumer-protection authorities and culturally appropriate professional practices.

Unit 4. Use AI to Support a Focused Job Search

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

The purpose of this unit is to help the learner use artificial intelligence as a carefully controlled support tool within a focused job-search process. AI can accelerate comparison, organization, drafting, and practice, but it cannot verify an opportunity, decide whether a position fits the learner, or speak truthfully about experience that the learner has not provided and reviewed.

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- define a focused job-search question before selecting an AI task;
- prepare verified, relevant, and privacy-safe information for an AI prompt;
- construct prompts that specify the goal, source material, constraints, and required output;
- analyze AI-generated suggestions against the original job posting and authoritative sources;
- revise AI-supported search terms, comparison notes, application language, and interview-practice materials;
- document verification, judgment, and final decisions;
- identify unsafe, misleading, biased, or fabricated output; and
- prepare an AI-Supported Focused Job Search Plan for the career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

A broad search can produce hundreds of poorly matched postings, repeated applications, and little useful learning. A focused search begins with a defined occupational target, verified qualifications, preferred conditions, and a manageable group of employers or locations. AI can help organize this information, generate alternative search terms, compare a learner's verified evidence with stated requirements, and simulate questions. Its value depends on the quality of the information supplied and the learner's ability to evaluate the output.

AI systems may produce confident but inaccurate statements, omit important qualifications, reproduce bias, or recommend language that does not sound like the applicant. Information entered into a digital service may also be stored or processed under terms the user has not examined. The learner therefore remains responsible for protecting sensitive information, consulting original sources, correcting errors, and approving every final communication and decision.

3. Essential Information and Research

A. Begin with a Focused Search Question

State the task before opening an AI tool. A useful question identifies the target role, location or work arrangement, experience level, important conditions, and the decision to be supported. For example: "Which verified entry-level project-coordination opportunities within commuting distance match my scheduling, reporting, spreadsheet, and team-support evidence?" This is more useful than "Find me a good job."

B. Assign AI an Appropriate Support Role

Appropriate AI Support	Learner Responsibility
Generate search-term alternatives from verified occupational language.	Select terms that match the actual target and test them in reliable sources.
Organize copied requirements into categories.	Compare the organization with the original posting and restore omitted details.
Identify possible matches between requirements and supplied evidence.	Confirm each match and reject any inference not supported by experience.

Appropriate AI Support	Learner Responsibility
Suggest questions for employer research or an interview.	Verify the questions, remove assumptions, and decide what is appropriate to ask.
Review a truthful draft for clarity, concision, and tone.	Preserve the learner's meaning and voice and approve the final wording.
Create a role-play using verified vacancy information.	Evaluate the feedback and practice answers based on genuine evidence.

C. Prepare Safe and Verified Inputs

Use only information needed for the task. Remove identification numbers, financial information, account credentials, medical information, confidential employer material, references' private contact information, and other sensitive data. Replace names with neutral labels when identity is unnecessary. Copy requirements from the original posting or employer site, retain the source link and access date, and distinguish confirmed facts from questions or assumptions.

D. Build a Complete Prompt

A focused prompt contains five parts: the task, verified context, source material, constraints, and output format. It should tell the system not to invent facts, identify uncertainty, and separate evidence from suggestions. A prompt is an instruction for assistance—not proof that the resulting answer is accurate.

Prompt Element	Question to Answer	Example
Task	What specific support is needed?	Compare the stated requirements with my verified evidence.
Context	What target and conditions guide the task?	Entry-level project coordination; local or hybrid; full-time.
Source material	What original information must be used?	The copied posting and selected evidence from my skills inventory.
Constraints	What must the system avoid or flag?	Do not invent experience; mark missing evidence as a question.
Output	How should the result be organized?	Use a table with requirement, evidence, gap, and next action.

E. Apply the VERIFY Review

Before using an AI-supported result, apply the following review:

- Validate each factual claim against the original posting, employer site, or another authoritative source.
- Examine whether important requirements, conditions, dates, or exceptions were omitted.
- Review every match between a requirement and personal evidence.
- Identify invented, exaggerated, biased, generic, or privacy-sensitive language.
- Edit the output so it remains accurate, relevant, concise, accessible, and consistent with the learner's voice.
- Record the source, date, verification result, revision, and final decision.
- You decide whether and how the result will be used.

4. Realistic Example

Leila has already researched project-coordination work, developed a professional digital identity, and begun communicating with professional contacts. She now limits her search to entry-level project coordinator, project assistant, and operations coordinator positions that are local or hybrid. She records the employer, original posting link, closing date, required qualifications, preferred qualifications, and work arrangement before asking AI to assist.

Leila supplies an anonymized copy of one verified posting and a short list of her documented evidence: coordinating a student team schedule, maintaining a shared task tracker, preparing status updates, using spreadsheets, and following up on assigned actions. She asks AI to organize the comparison without inventing experience. The output incorrectly describes her as having “managed multiple corporate projects.” Leila rejects that statement, replaces it with accurate evidence from her student project, and marks formal budget experience as a gap. She then decides to apply because the budget requirement is preferred rather than required and records a question for further research.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

A. Define the Search Decision

Target role: Entry-level project coordinator or project assistant. Location or arrangement: Local or hybrid. Required evidence to examine: scheduling, status reporting, spreadsheets, team communication, and follow-through. Decision: Determine whether a verified posting merits further research or an application.

B. Prepare the Source Packet

- Copy the posting from the employer’s official site and record the link and access date.
- Separate required qualifications, preferred qualifications, duties, conditions, and application instructions.
- Select only relevant evidence from the skills inventory and career portfolio.
- Remove personal identifiers and confidential information.
- List missing or uncertain information as questions.

C. Submit a Controlled Prompt

Sample prompt

“Using only the verified job-posting text and evidence I provide, organize a comparison for an entry-level project-coordination application. Create four columns: employer requirement, my supporting evidence, gap or question, and next action. Do not invent, exaggerate, or infer experience. Quote no more than a short phrase from the posting. Mark unsupported items ‘No verified evidence provided.’ Identify any requirement that needs confirmation from the original employer source. I will review every result before deciding whether to apply.”

D. Verify and Revise the Output

Employer Requirement	Verified Evidence	Gap or Question	Next Action
Coordinate schedules and deadlines.	Maintained milestones and reminders for a semester team project.	Employment setting differs from a student project.	Describe the context accurately; do not label it corporate experience.
Prepare project status updates.	Produced weekly progress summaries for the team and instructor.	Confirm the employer’s preferred format.	Retain one anonymized work sample and research the organization’s tools.

Employer Requirement	Verified Evidence	Gap or Question	Next Action
Use spreadsheet software.	Created a tracker with dates, owners, and completion status.	Skill level may need stronger evidence.	Complete a timed practice task and record the result.
Support project budgets preferred.	No verified budget evidence provided.	Preferred or required?	Confirm the wording; identify a basic budget-learning activity.

E. Record the Decision

Leila records: “Proceed with the application after confirming that budget support is preferred. Use verified student-project evidence, retain the original context, and complete a spreadsheet practice task. Do not use the AI-generated corporate-project statement.” This short decision record shows how evidence and judgment—not the AI output alone—guided the action.

6. Digital and AI Applications

Digital tools may help create saved searches, manage a job-search tracker, compare posting dates, schedule follow-up, preserve source links, and maintain version history. AI may help generate keyword alternatives, structure a requirement-to-evidence comparison, identify questions, revise a truthful draft, or conduct a practice interview. The learner should use the minimum necessary data, examine the tool’s privacy terms and account settings, and avoid uploading confidential or identity-sensitive information.

Job-Search Task	Useful AI Instruction	Required Human Check
Search vocabulary	Generate related titles and keywords from verified occupational terms.	Test each term and remove titles outside the target.
Posting analysis	Sort copied text into duties, requirements, preferences, and conditions.	Compare every item with the original posting.
Evidence matching	Map supplied evidence to requirements and label missing evidence.	Confirm context, strength, and accuracy of every match.
Draft revision	Suggest clearer wording without adding claims.	Restore personal voice and approve each statement.
Interview practice	Ask questions based only on the verified posting.	Answer from genuine experience and evaluate the feedback.
Search management	Suggest priorities from criteria the learner defines.	Make the decision and document the reason.

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Define the Focus

Target role(s): _____. Location or work arrangement: _____.
 Experience level: _____. Essential conditions: _____. Decision
 this AI task will support: _____.

B. Prepare and Protect the Evidence

Original source and access date: _____. Verified posting information selected:
 _____. Personal evidence selected: _____. Information
 removed or anonymized: _____. Unanswered questions: _____.

C. Construct the Prompt

Task: _____. Context: _____. Source material: _____.
Constraints: _____. Required output format: _____.
Direction to identify uncertainty and avoid invention: _____.

D. Complete the VERIFY Review

Review Step	Finding	Correction or Decision
Validate facts and sources.	_____	_____
Examine omissions.	_____	_____
Review evidence matches.	_____	_____
Identify unsafe or misleading language.	_____	_____
Edit for accuracy and personal voice.	_____	_____
Record verification and revisions.	_____	_____
You make the final decision.	_____	_____

E. Practice and Receive Feedback

Ask a reviewer to compare the original source, your prompt, the AI-supported result, your verification record, and your final decision. Revise any item that is inaccurate, unsupported, unfocused, overly generic, privacy-sensitive, or inconsistent with your voice. Preserve the original and revised versions in the career folder.

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

Select the best answer for each question.

1. Which search question is most focused?

- A. Find any job for me.
- B. Which verified local or hybrid entry-level project-support postings match my documented scheduling, spreadsheet, and reporting evidence?
- C. Write my career.
- D. Tell me what employers want.

2. What should be included in a controlled AI prompt?

- A. A vague request and no source material.
- B. Personal identification and account credentials.
- C. A task, verified context, source material, constraints, and output format.
- D. Permission to invent missing experience.

3. What is the proper response when AI invents experience?

- A. Keep it if it sounds professional.
- B. Remove it and replace it only with accurate, verified evidence.
- C. Submit it and explain later.

D. Ask the system to make it stronger.

4. Which information is appropriate to anonymize or omit?

- A. The target job title.
- B. The employer's published requirements.
- C. Identification numbers, credentials, private contact information, and confidential material.
- D. The search decision.

5. What does the VERIFY review require first?

- A. Validate factual claims against original or authoritative sources.
- B. Accept the most confident answer.
- C. Send the output immediately.
- D. Delete the original posting.

6. Which task should remain the learner's responsibility?

- A. Organizing copied requirements.
- B. Generating keyword alternatives.
- C. Making and documenting the final application decision.
- D. Formatting a comparison table.

7. What should a learner do when a posting requirement is unclear?

- A. Let AI decide what it means.
- B. Record it as a question and verify it through the original employer source or an appropriate contact.
- C. Omit it.
- D. Invent matching evidence.

8. What should the portfolio product demonstrate?

- A. The largest possible number of AI outputs.
- B. A focused search, safe inputs, controlled prompts, verification, revisions, and learner-approved decisions.
- C. Automated applications without review.
- D. A promise that AI results are accurate.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. The question identifies the target, conditions, experience level, and evidence to be examined.
- 2 C. These elements define the task and control the type of assistance requested.
- 3 B. Unsupported experiences must be removed; only genuine evidence may be used.
- 4 C. Sensitive and confidential information is unnecessary for most job-search support tasks.
- 5 A. Verification begins with the original posting, employer site, or another authoritative source.
- 6 C. AI may organize or suggest, but the learner remains responsible for the decision.
- 7 B. Uncertainty should be recorded and resolved through an appropriate verified source.
- 8 B. The product should document responsible use from focused question through final decision.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I defined a focused search question before using AI.
- ☐ I used an original or authoritative source and recorded the access date.
- ☐ I supplied only relevant and verified personal evidence.

- ☐ I removed or anonymized sensitive and confidential information.
- ☐ My prompt states the task, context, source material, constraints, and output format.
- ☐ My prompt directs the system not to invent or exaggerate information.
- ☐ I compared every factual statement with the original source.
- ☐ I examined omissions, evidence matches, assumptions, and possible bias.
- ☐ I removed unsupported claims and restored accurate context and personal voice.
- ☐ I recorded the original output, verification findings, and justified revisions.
- ☐ I made and documented the final decision.
- ☐ A reviewer examined the source-to-output verification trail.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add an AI-Supported Focused Job Search Plan containing:

- the target role, location or work arrangement, experience level, and essential conditions;
- two focused search questions and tested search-term alternatives;
- one verified and privacy-safe source packet;
- one complete prompt with task, context, source material, constraints, and output format;
- one requirement-to-evidence comparison showing gaps and next actions;
- a completed VERIFY review with source and access date;
- the original AI-supported result and the learner's corrected version;
- a brief decision record explaining whether and how the result was used; and
- a one-week schedule for verified searches, applications, and follow-up.

AI-Supported Focused Job Search Summary

Search Target	Verified Sources	AI Support Used	Verification and Final Decision
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Job-search and career resources sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.
<https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Federal Trade Commission. Job Scams. <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/job-scams>

Federal Trade Commission. That Job Offer Text Is Probably a Scam.
<https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2026/04/job-offer-text-probably-scam>

National Institute of Standards and Technology. Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework and Generative Artificial Intelligence Profile. https://airc.nist.gov/AI_RM_F_Knowledge_Base/AI_RM_F

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable employment, privacy, consumer-protection, and artificial-intelligence authorities. Verify local requirements before acting on AI-supported information.

Unit 5. Prepare a 90-Day Job Search Action Plan

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

The purpose of this unit is to help the learner convert the focused job-search strategy developed in Units 1–4 into an organized 90-day action plan. At this point, the learner has not yet prepared the complete résumé and application package. The plan therefore establishes what will be done, when it will be done, what evidence will be saved, and when progress will be reviewed after Part III materials are completed and applications begin.

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- state a focused 90-day job-search goal;
- sequence preparation, application, networking, skill-development, and follow-up actions;
- establish 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones;
- assign measurable weekly actions, quality standards, and due dates;
- select action, quality, and future result indicators;
- design a job-search activity and evidence tracker;
- anticipate barriers and identify preventive, contingency, and support actions;
- schedule weekly and two-week review points; and
- prepare a Career Goal and 90-Day Action Plan for the career portfolio.

2. Why This Competency Matters

Occupational research and a focused strategy do not produce progress unless they are translated into scheduled action. A 90-day plan gives the learner enough time to prepare materials, test a search routine, strengthen evidence, contact appropriate people, submit carefully matched applications, and review emerging results. Breaking the period into milestones and weekly actions makes the work manageable and reduces unfocused activity.

The plan must also respect the proper sequence. The learner first uses the research and evidence from Parts I and II to develop the résumé, application materials, and career portfolio in Part III. Applications are then submitted, recorded, and reviewed. Response rates, interview patterns, and evidence-based adjustments belong to that later implementation stage and will be addressed after the application package has been completed.

3. Essential Information and Research

A. State the 90-Day Goal

Identify the target occupation or related roles, preferred location or work arrangement, time period, essential conditions, and evidence that will demonstrate responsible progress. The goal should guide action without promising an outcome that the learner cannot control.

B. Organize the Plan into Three Phases

Time Period	Primary Purpose	Examples of Planned Work
Days 1–30	Prepare the application foundation.	Complete Part III résumé and application materials; select verified opportunities; obtain feedback; establish the tracker.
Days 31–60	Implement the focused search.	Submit carefully matched applications; conduct appropriate outreach; strengthen selected evidence; complete follow-up.
Days 61–90	Continue implementation and review evidence.	Compare actions with emerging results; identify patterns; obtain feedback; determine whether later adjustments are justified.

C. Select Useful Indicators

Indicator Type	What It Shows	Examples
Action indicators	Whether planned work was completed.	Postings researched; résumé versions prepared; applications submitted; contacts approached; practice completed.
Quality indicators	Whether the work meets an appropriate standard.	Verified source; strong requirement match; accurate evidence; checklist completed; reviewer feedback addressed.
Future result indicators	How employers respond after applications begin.	Replies; screening calls; interviews; work-sample requests; referrals; offers.
Learning indicators	What information should guide later decisions.	Clarified requirement; new occupational term; identified gap; improved example; useful contact feedback.

Action and quality indicators can guide the plan immediately. Result indicators are recorded only after applications begin. A result should be interpreted with its context rather than treated as proof that one factor caused the response.

D. Build the Activity and Evidence Tracker

Prepare fields for the original source, employer, position, date found, closing date, match decision, planned action, application version, contact, follow-up date, response, learning, and next action. The tracker should preserve useful evidence without storing account credentials, identity numbers, private contact information, or confidential communication unnecessarily.

E. Anticipate Barriers and Support

Identify conditions that may interrupt the plan, such as limited time, transportation, accessibility needs, unreliable connectivity, incomplete evidence, language needs, caregiving responsibilities, or financial constraints. For each significant barrier, record an early warning sign, a preventive action, a contingency action, and an appropriate person, service, or resource that can help.

F. Schedule Review Points

Schedule a brief weekly check for completed actions and approaching deadlines. Schedule a more detailed review every two weeks after applications begin. The later review will compare actions, quality, responses, feedback, and new verified information. Part III will provide the résumé and application products required before those results can be interpreted.

4. Realistic Example

Leila uses her research on entry-level project coordinator, project assistant, and operations coordinator positions to prepare a 90-day plan. During Days 1–30, she will complete a targeted résumé, prepare application and inquiry-message templates, organize portfolio evidence, identify six verified opportunities, and obtain feedback. She does not count applications as completed until the materials are prepared, tailored, reviewed, and submitted.

During Days 31–60, Leila plans to submit carefully matched applications, conduct informational outreach, complete a spreadsheet evidence activity, and record follow-up dates. During Days 61–90, she will continue the search and examine the results accumulated after submission. She schedules weekly action checks and two-week evidence reviews, but she reserves decisions about changing the strategy until sufficient implementation evidence exists.

5. Step by Step Demonstration

A. Write the Goal

“During the next 90 days, I will prepare and implement a focused search for verified entry-level project-support positions that are local or hybrid. I will complete accurate application materials, submit only to appropriate matches, strengthen selected evidence, maintain professional communication, and review documented progress at scheduled points.”

B. Establish Milestones

Milestone	Required Actions	Evidence to Save
Day 30	Complete résumé and application foundation; select initial verified opportunities; obtain feedback.	Reviewed résumé, application template, portfolio evidence list, opportunity record, feedback notes.
Day 60	Implement focused applications, outreach, skill practice, and follow-up.	Submitted versions, confirmation dates, contact record, practice result, follow-up schedule.
Day 90	Complete the first implementation cycle and prepare the documented review.	Activity record, results available at that time, feedback, questions, and next decision point.

C. Plan the First Two Weeks

Action	Quantity or Standard	Due Date	Evidence
Select verified target postings.	Six postings from original employer or reliable sources.	_____	Links, access dates, and match notes.
Prepare résumé evidence.	Select evidence for the five most frequent relevant requirements.	_____	Requirement-to-evidence table.
Organize portfolio materials.	Locate or create two relevant, privacy-safe work samples.	_____	Artifact list and improvement notes.
Arrange feedback.	Identify one qualified reviewer and provide clear review criteria.	_____	Review date and feedback record.

D. Prepare for Review

Leila schedules weekly checks for deadlines and completed preparation. Her first detailed review occurs after the résumé and application materials are developed in Part III. She will then examine actual applications and responses rather than predicting results before implementation.

6. Digital and AI Applications

Digital tools may schedule actions, preserve source links, maintain version history, and prepare reminders. AI may help organize anonymized plan entries, compare proposed actions with stated milestones, identify vague measures, or suggest questions about possible barriers. The learner must verify every entry, protect sensitive information, and approve the final plan.

Sample prompt

“Review this anonymized 90-day job-search plan for sequence, measurable actions, feasible deadlines, missing evidence, and unclear review points. Do not predict employer responses or invent

qualifications. Identify any action that occurs before its required preparation and suggest a corrected sequence. I will verify and approve every change.”

7. Guided Practice Activity

A. Define the 90-Day Goal

Target occupation(s): _____ . Location or work arrangement: _____ .
Essential conditions: _____ . Starting date: _____ .
Day 90: _____ . Evidence of responsible progress: _____ .

B. Build the Milestones

Time Point	Milestone	Actions Required	Evidence to Save
Day 30	_____	_____	_____
Day 60	_____	_____	_____
Day 90	_____	_____	_____

C. Plan Weekly Actions

Action	Quantity or Quality Standard	Due Date	Support or Resource	Evidence
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

D. Prepare the Tracking System

Fields to record: _____ . Privacy protections: _____ . Weekly check date: _____ . Two-week review dates after applications begin: _____ .
Person or service providing feedback: _____ .

E. Plan for Barriers and Support

Barrier	Early Warning Sign	Preventive Action	Contingency Action	Support
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

F. Practice and Receive Feedback

Ask a reviewer to examine the goal, sequence, feasibility, measures, barriers, and review schedule. Record one strength, one improvement area, and the next action. Revise the plan and preserve both versions in the career folder.

8. Check on Learning and Feedback

Select the best answer for each question.

1. Why should résumé preparation appear before application submission?

- A. Every résumé must be identical.
- B. The learner needs accurate, targeted evidence before applying.
- C. Applications do not require occupational research.
- D. Employers prepare the résumé.

2. Which action belongs primarily in Days 1–30?

- A. Calculate an interview rate before applying.
- B. Complete and review the résumé and application foundation.
- C. Diagnose repeated employer nonresponse.
- D. Accept an offer.

3. Which is an action indicator?

- A. Employer interview request.
- B. Carefully matched application submitted.
- C. Employer hiring decision.
- D. Number of competing candidates.

4. Which is a quality indicator?

- A. The application was checked against verified requirements and reviewed.
- B. The employer replied.
- C. The applicant received an offer.
- D. The vacancy closed.

5. When should response patterns be analyzed?

- A. Before applications exist.
- B. After applications begin and sufficient documented evidence accumulates.
- C. Before the résumé is prepared.
- D. Without retaining context.

6. What should a barrier plan include?

- A. Only the barrier's name.
- B. An early warning sign, preventive action, contingency, and support resource.
- C. A guaranteed outcome.
- D. Private information from every contact.

7. Which AI use is responsible?

- A. Predicting employer decisions as facts.
- B. Reviewing an anonymized plan for sequence and measurable actions.
- C. Inventing missing qualifications.
- D. Submitting applications automatically.

8. What is the portfolio product for this unit?

- A. A completed interview evaluation.

- B. A Career Goal and 90-Day Job Search Action Plan.
- C. An employment contract.
- D. A record of results that have not occurred.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. Application materials must present verified evidence that is relevant to the selected opportunity.
- 2 B. The application foundation is prepared before the implementation phase.
- 3 B. Submission is an action the learner can complete and document.
- 4 A. Source comparison and review provide evidence of application quality.
- 5 B. Patterns require actual events and sufficient contextual evidence.
- 6 B. These elements make the response practical and usable.
- 7 B. AI may support planning when the learner protects information, verifies output, and decides.
- 8 B. The plan connects the strategy developed in Part II with the application work in Part III.

9. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ My 90-day goal identifies a target, conditions, time period, and evidence of progress.
- ☐ The plan places résumé and application preparation before submission and result analysis.
- ☐ The 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones form a logical sequence.
- ☐ Weekly actions include quantities or quality standards and due dates.
- ☐ I distinguished action, quality, future result, and learning indicators.
- ☐ The tracking system records sources, versions, dates, actions, and later results accurately.
- ☐ I protected private and confidential information.
- ☐ I identified barriers, early warning signs, preventive actions, contingencies, and support.
- ☐ Weekly checks and later two-week reviews are scheduled.
- ☐ The plan is feasible within my time, access, and resource conditions.
- ☐ AI-supported suggestions were verified and personally approved.
- ☐ A reviewer identified a strength, an improvement area, and the next action.

10. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Career Goal and 90-Day Job Search Action Plan containing:

- a focused goal with target, conditions, time period, and evidence of progress;
- 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones;
- weekly actions with quantities or quality standards and due dates;
- a sequence that completes Part III materials before application submission;
- action, quality, future result, and learning indicators;
- a job-search activity and evidence tracker;
- barriers, early warning signs, preventive actions, contingencies, and support resources;
- weekly checks and two-week review dates after implementation begins; and
- the evidence that will be carried into Part III.

Career Goal and 90-Day Job Search Action Plan Summary

Goal or Milestone	Planned Actions	Evidence to Save	Review Date
_____	_____	_____	_____

Goal or Milestone	Planned Actions	Evidence to Save	Review Date

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Job-search, career-planning, and American Job Center resources sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined. <https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

U.S. Department of Labor. Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition: Employment Plan and job-search guidance. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/tap/efct>

USA.gov. Job training and employment resources. <https://www.usa.gov/job-training>

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable public employment services, workforce agencies, professional associations, and local labor-market authorities.

Transition to Part III

Part II established the learner's focused job-search strategy and 90-day action plan. Part III develops the résumé, application materials, inquiry messages, and career portfolio needed to implement that strategy. The learner will use the occupational research, skills evidence, professional identity, target opportunities, and action plan completed in Parts I and II to prepare accurate and focused materials. After those materials are completed and applications begin, the learner will monitor results and adjust the strategy using documented evidence.

Part III: Present Your Qualifications with Evidence



Part III Overview

Part III guides the learner through five connected tasks: preparing a targeted resume, completing applications and job-inquiry messages, creating a digital career portfolio, adapting materials truthfully, and following up while evaluating application results.

Opening Reflection

What evidence currently demonstrates that you can perform the work you seek? Which resume, application, portfolio, or follow-up task requires the most improvement?

Personal Learning Goal

Write one specific result you intend to produce while completing Part III and identify how you will evaluate its accuracy, relevance, and professional quality.

Unit 1. Write a Resume That Wins Approval

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

A résumé is a selective, accurate presentation of qualifications for a defined employment purpose. It does not tell an entire life story. It helps an employer determine whether the applicant's evidence is relevant enough to justify further review or an interview. A strong résumé therefore begins with the target job, not with a decorative template.

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- analyze a verified job posting and identify the qualifications that require evidence;
- select a résumé type appropriate to the applicant's experience and employment purpose;
- organize education, experience, projects, service, and skills into relevant sections;
- write concise, evidence-based accomplishment statements without exaggeration;
- prepare the résumé in the format required by the employer or application system;
- verify every claim, protect private information, and use AI only as a reviewed support tool; and
- produce, test, evaluate, revise, and preserve a targeted résumé and evidence record.

2. Begin with the Employer's Requirements

Before drafting, place the verified job posting beside the evidence gathered in Parts I and II. Separate required qualifications from preferred qualifications, duties, tools, conditions, and application instructions. For each important requirement, identify an honest source of evidence. If evidence is missing, do not disguise the gap with inflated wording. Decide whether the requirement can be demonstrated through education, employment, a project, volunteer service, independent work, or a work sample.

Posting requirement	Question to answer	Possible evidence
Coordinate schedules and deadlines	Where did I organize time, people, or tasks?	Course project schedule, event plan, work assignment tracker
Prepare status information	What progress information did I prepare and for whom?	Weekly update, meeting notes, one-page status report
Use spreadsheet software	What did I organize, calculate, verify, or present?	Tracker, cleaned data, formulas, summary chart
Communicate with team members	What communication helped work move forward?	Follow-up messages, agendas, presentations, service records

3. Select the Appropriate Résumé Type

No single résumé arrangement serves every applicant. The choice should make relevant, verifiable evidence easy to find. The applicant should not choose a format merely to hide facts. Dates, titles, and employment history must remain accurate wherever they appear.

Résumé type	Works best when	Main caution
Chronological	Experience is steady and recent positions show relevant progression.	Unexplained gaps or unrelated recent work may receive attention.
Functional or skills-based	Skills come from varied, interrupted, short-term, volunteer, project, caregiving, or nontraditional experience.	Some employers and screening systems expect a clear employment history; include an accurate history section.

Résumé type	Works best when	Main caution
Combination	The applicant has substantial experience or is changing fields and needs both a skills summary and detailed work history.	Avoid repeating the same evidence in both sections or making the résumé unnecessarily long.
Targeted	A specific opening requires a carefully selected version that uses relevant language and evidence.	Targeting never permits copying claims from the posting or adding qualifications the applicant does not possess.

The following complete sample demonstrates a targeted entry-level résumé. Leila LouMeena and all organizations, contact information, educational institutions, and employment details in the example are fictional and are provided solely for instructional purposes. The example emphasizes organization and evidence rather than a design that must be copied exactly.

Complete Example: Leila LouMeena's Targeted Entry-Level Résumé

Leila is a recent graduate applying for a verified entry-level project coordinator position. Her résumé is targeted because each section and accomplishment statement responds to recurring requirements in that opening. It does not claim professional project-management experience she does not possess.

LEILA LOUMEENA

Entry-Level Project Coordinator

City, State/Country | 555-0100 | name@example.com | linkedin.com/in/name

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Recent business graduate with verified experience organizing team schedules, tracking assignments, preparing progress updates, and coordinating shared digital work. Seeking to contribute careful follow-up, spreadsheet organization, and clear communication in an entry-level project coordination role.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration | Midtown Regional University | May 2026

Relevant study: project management, operations, business communication, and spreadsheet analysis

RELEVANT PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Community Business Event Proposal | Senior Course Project | Spring 2026

- Created and maintained a four-week shared schedule for a five-person team, recorded agreed responsibilities, and monitored deadlines.
- Prepared weekly progress summaries and followed up respectfully when two assigned tasks were late.
- Organized shared files and meeting information; the team submitted the proposal on time and received strong evaluation for organization.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Student Services Assistant | Midtown Regional University | 2024-2026

- Updated appointment records, answered routine questions, and referred students to the appropriate office while protecting private information.

SELECTED SKILLS

Project support: schedules, task tracking, meeting follow-up, status summaries

Digital: Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, shared-file systems

Communication: professional email, presentations, collaborative problem solving

EVIDENCE AVAILABLE

Project schedule, progress summaries, proposal excerpt, and instructor feedback available in digital portfolio.

4. Build the Core Résumé Sections

Use only sections that help the employer evaluate relevant qualifications. A common sequence includes contact information, a target or professional profile, education, relevant experience, projects, selected skills, certifications or training, and optional service or leadership. Section order may change with the résumé type, but headings should remain familiar and easy to scan.

Section	Include	Avoid
Contact information	Professional name, location as appropriate, reliable telephone and email, relevant portfolio or profile link	Sensitive identity data, full street address when unnecessary, unrelated social accounts
Profile or summary	Target role, strongest relevant evidence, and contribution	Generic claims such as hardworking, excellent, or perfect without evidence
Education	Degree or credential, institution, completion date or expected date, relevant details	Courses and grades that do not support the target
Experience and projects	Role, setting, dates, actions, tools or methods, results, and verifiable evidence	Duty lists copied from a posting or achievements belonging to a team without clarifying personal contribution
Skills	Specific occupational and digital capabilities the applicant can demonstrate	Long keyword lists, obsolete tools, or skills the applicant cannot perform

5. Write Evidence-Based Accomplishment Statements

Begin each statement with a precise action verb, identify what was done and how, and include a verified result or useful scale when available. Numbers improve a statement only when they are accurate and meaningful. If a result cannot be measured, describe completion, quality, timeliness, responsibility, or the evidence produced.

Weak statement	Evidence-based revision
Helped with a team project.	Created and maintained a four-week shared schedule for a five-person team and prepared weekly progress updates.
Excellent customer service skills.	Responded to customer questions by telephone and email, recorded unresolved concerns, and referred issues requiring authorization.
Responsible for reports.	Compiled verified attendance and feedback data into quarterly program summaries for leadership review.

Weak statement	Evidence-based revision
Knows Excel.	Used a spreadsheet to track referrals, check incomplete records, and summarize next actions for staff review.

6. Prepare the Required Document or Electronic Format

Follow the employer's instructions exactly. A well-written résumé can fail if it is submitted in the wrong form or becomes unreadable after upload.

Format	When and how to use it
Word document	Use when DOCX is requested or when an editable file is required. Apply common fonts, simple headings, consistent spacing, and restrained formatting.
PDF	Use when PDF is accepted and layout preservation matters. Export from the final document, reopen the PDF, and verify text, links, page count, margins, and selectable content.
Electronic application fields	Enter information in the employer's required fields. Do not assume an uploaded résumé replaces required entries. Check dates, titles, and spelling after pasting.
Plain text	Keep an unformatted version for systems that remove bullets, columns, or special characters. Recheck headings and line breaks after conversion.
Employer-required form	Use the specified platform, file type, naming convention, and deadline. When instructions conflict with personal preference, the verified employer requirement controls.

Use a one-column structure unless a verified purpose justifies another design. Avoid photographs, charts, text boxes, headers containing essential contact information, decorative icons, and complex columns when an applicant-tracking system may read the file. Hiring practices differ across countries; follow lawful local expectations and the employer's stated requirements.

7. Accuracy, Privacy, Accessibility, and Responsible AI Use

- Verify names, titles, institutions, credentials, dates, tools, responsibilities, and results against records or reliable witnesses.
- Do not include government identification numbers, banking information, birth date, marital status, health information, or other sensitive data unless lawfully required through a secure process at the appropriate stage.
- Use readable type, clear headings, consistent dates, meaningful link text, adequate contrast, and simple document structure.
- AI may help compare verified posting language with verified evidence, propose concise wording, identify repetition, or check consistency.
- AI must not invent experience, measures, credentials, job titles, dates, references, or employer facts. Remove sensitive information before using a public AI system, verify every suggestion, and retain authorship of the final résumé.

8. Step-by-Step Demonstration

1. Confirm the target. Save the verified posting and record the employer's submission instructions.
2. Map requirements to evidence. Mark each important qualification as demonstrated, developing, unsupported, or requiring clarification.
3. Choose the résumé type. Select the structure that makes the strongest relevant evidence visible without concealing or distorting facts.

4. Select and organize content. Bring forward the education, work, projects, service, training, and skills that support the target.
5. Draft accomplishment statements. Use action, task, tool or method, result, and evidence when appropriate.
6. Format the résumé. Apply recognizable headings, consistent dates, readable spacing, and the required file type or electronic fields.
7. Verify every claim. Compare the résumé with records, portfolio evidence, and the posting; remove or correct unsupported language.
8. Test the required format. Reopen the file or review the electronic application to check readability, parsing, links, line breaks, page count, and completeness.
9. Obtain feedback and revise. Ask a reviewer to identify one clear strength, one improvement need, and the next revision.
10. Preserve the version. Save the final targeted résumé, plain-text copy, evidence record, posting, date, and submission version in the career portfolio.

9. Guided Practice Activity

Practice Activity A: Select and Defend the Résumé Type

Review the four samples and your own experience. Select the chronological, functional or skills-based, combination, or targeted structure. In three to five sentences, explain why the chosen type makes your most relevant evidence easier to evaluate and identify one limitation you must manage honestly.

Practice Activity B: Complete the Requirement-to-Evidence Record

Requirement from verified posting	My evidence and source	Status	Résumé location or next action
		Demonstrated / Developing / Unsupported / Clarify	
		Demonstrated / Developing / Unsupported / Clarify	
		Demonstrated / Developing / Unsupported / Clarify	
		Demonstrated / Developing / Unsupported / Clarify	

Practice Activity C: Produce and Test Your Complete Résumé

Using an actual verified job posting, prepare the complete résumé you would submit. This is a performance activity, not an outline. Complete all relevant sections, use your own verified information, and then:

- save the working Word version and the format required by the employer;

- complete every required electronic field when an online application is used;
- reopen or preview the submitted format and test headings, dates, bullets, links, page count, line breaks, and readability;
- compare every important claim with the evidence record;
- ask a reviewer to identify a strength, an improvement need, and the next revision;
- revise the résumé and record what changed and why; and
- preserve the posting, final résumé, plain-text copy, evidence record, test results, and revision note in the career portfolio.

10. Check on Learning

1. What should determine résumé content?

- A. A decorative template.
- B. The verified target job and the applicant's relevant evidence.
- C. Every experience the applicant has ever had.
- D. Keywords copied from other applicants.

2. Which applicant is most clearly suited to a chronological résumé?

- A. An applicant with steady, relevant progression.
- B. An applicant trying to conceal dates.
- C. An applicant with no verified experience.
- D. An applicant submitting no employment history.

3. What is a responsible use of a functional résumé?

- A. Removing all dates to prevent questions.
- B. Inventing a skills history.
- C. Bringing forward relevant skills from varied experience while retaining an accurate history.
- D. Replacing evidence with broad claims.

4. What distinguishes a targeted résumé?

- A. It changes facts to match each opening.
- B. It selects and orders verified evidence for a specific opportunity.
- C. It always uses two columns.
- D. It omits education.

5. Which statement provides the strongest evidence?

- A. Great communicator.
- B. Responsible for teamwork.
- C. Prepared weekly progress summaries and followed up on late tasks for a five-person project team.
- D. Knows many programs.

6. What should the applicant do after exporting a résumé to PDF or uploading it?

- A. Assume the conversion worked.
- B. Reopen or preview it and verify readability, completeness, links, line breaks, and page count.
- C. Delete the editable version.
- D. Add confidential information.

7. Which AI use is acceptable?

- A. Inventing a result that sounds measurable.

- B. Adding a credential the posting prefers.
- C. Suggesting clearer wording from anonymized, verified evidence for the applicant to review.
- D. Submitting the résumé without human review.

8. What is the required performance before using the evaluation checklist?

- A. Read the sample résumés only.
- B. Choose a favorite design.
- C. Produce and test a complete résumé for an actual verified posting.
- D. Ask AI to choose a career.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. Relevance begins with a verified employment purpose and evidence the applicant can support.
- 2 A. Chronological organization makes steady, relevant progression easy to see.
- 3 C. A skills-based structure may organize varied evidence, but it must not distort employment history.
- 4 B. Targeting selects and orders truthful evidence for one defined opportunity.
- 5 C. The statement identifies an action, product, frequency, and scale that can be verified.
- 6 B. Conversion and upload can change content or layout; the applicant must test the actual required format.
- 7 C. AI may help refine verified content after privacy is protected, but the applicant must verify and approve the result.
- 8 C. The checklist evaluates an authentic performance product, so the complete résumé must come first.

11. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ My résumé is prepared for a specific, verified job or clearly defined occupational target.
- ☐ I selected a résumé type that fits my evidence and explained the choice honestly.
- ☐ The most relevant qualifications are easy to locate in the first review.
- ☐ Every title, date, credential, tool, responsibility, action, and result is accurate and supportable.
- ☐ Accomplishment statements use precise actions and meaningful evidence rather than unsupported adjectives.
- ☐ Employment gaps or career changes are handled truthfully and are not disguised by misleading formatting.
- ☐ Contact information is professional, current, and limited to what is appropriate.
- ☐ The résumé excludes unnecessary sensitive and private information.
- ☐ Headings, dates, verb tense, spacing, bullets, capitalization, and punctuation are consistent.
- ☐ The document is readable, accessible, and compatible with the employer's stated submission process.
- ☐ I tested the actual Word, PDF, plain-text, electronic-field, or employer-required version.
- ☐ AI-supported language was based only on verified evidence and was personally reviewed and approved.
- ☐ A reviewer identified a strength, an improvement need, and a next action.
- ☐ I revised the résumé, documented important changes, and preserved the correct final version.

12. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Targeted Résumé and Evidence Verification Record containing:

- the verified job posting or occupational target used for the résumé;
- the selected résumé type and a brief explanation of the choice;
- the completed requirement-to-evidence record;
- the editable résumé and the employer-required submission version;
- a plain-text copy for electronic systems;
- the format-test results, reviewer feedback, and revision note; and
- the date and filename of the final version approved for use.

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Résumé Guide and job-search resources sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Resumes/resumes.aspx>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined. <https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

USAJOBS. What to Include in Your Resume. <https://help.usajobs.gov/faq/application/documents/resume/what-to-include>

U.S. Department of Labor. Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition and employment-planning resources. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/tap/efct>

For locations outside the United States, consult the employer's instructions, applicable public employment services, professional associations, and lawful national résumé practices.

Transition to Unit 2

The completed résumé now provides the verified evidence needed for an application. Unit 2 focuses on completing application fields and preparing concise job inquiry and application messages without contradicting, exaggerating, or merely repeating the résumé.

Unit 2. Prepare Applications and Job Inquiry Messages

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

The résumé presents selected evidence, but the application creates the employer's formal record of the candidate. Application fields, screening questions, uploaded documents, email messages, and later explanations must agree. A strong candidate does not merely complete every blank. The candidate reads instructions, provides accurate and relevant information, protects private data, and communicates a clear next purpose.

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- analyze the employer's application process and required documents before beginning;
- prepare a verified master application record without treating it as a universal submission;
- complete electronic or paper application fields accurately and consistently;
- respond truthfully to required and preferred qualification questions;
- write concise application, inquiry, referral, and follow-up messages for a defined purpose;
- protect credentials, personal information, references, and confidential material;
- use AI only to organize or refine verified information under human review; and
- test, submit, document, evaluate, and preserve each application package.

2. Understand the Application as a Connected Evidence Package

Employers may collect candidate information through an online account, application form, résumé upload, screening questions, cover letter, portfolio link, assessment, email, or referral process. These components should reinforce one another without becoming identical. The résumé selects qualifications. The application supplies the employer's required record. A message explains purpose and directs attention. The portfolio provides permitted evidence. Together they form one application package.

Component	Primary purpose	Consistency check
Application fields	Provide required facts in the employer's structure.	Names, dates, titles, education, credentials, and eligibility responses agree with verified records.
Résumé	Present the most relevant evidence for the target.	Claims do not exceed or contradict the application.
Application or cover message	State the purpose, connection, and strongest relevant contribution.	Examples are accurate and add meaning rather than repeating the résumé.
Portfolio or work sample	Demonstrate selected performance when requested or useful.	The applicant owns the material or has permission to share it; private information is removed.
Screening questions	Help the employer determine eligibility and match.	Answers are literal, supportable, and consistent with the evidence record.

3. Prepare Before Opening the Application

Some systems time out, restrict editing after submission, or ask questions that require records. Prepare verified information before entering it. Save the original posting, closing date, instructions, contact channel, required documents, and file-naming rules. Confirm that the opening appears through an official or otherwise verifiable source.

Information to prepare	Verification source	Application decision
Legal and professional name; contact information	Personal records and current contact test	Use the form requested; distinguish a preferred professional name when the process allows.
Education and credentials	Transcript, diploma, license, certificate, issuing organization	Enter the exact credential and completion status; do not convert a certificate of completion into a license or degree.
Employment and activity history	Records, prior documents, employer information, calendar	Use accurate titles and dates; explain a gap only when requested or strategically necessary.
References	Direct permission and current contact confirmation	Provide only when requested or appropriate; do not assume permission.
Eligibility and screening responses	Posting, official instructions, personal facts, applicable law	Read literally; seek qualified guidance when the meaning or legal consequence is unclear.
Work samples and links	Ownership, permission, privacy and link test	Share only relevant, accessible, nonconfidential evidence.

Build a Master Application Record

Maintain one secure record of verified education, employment, projects, credentials, dates, supervisors or references who have consented, and frequently requested facts. The master record supports accuracy; it is not submitted unchanged to every employer. Each application still requires a fresh review of relevance, instructions, privacy, and wording.

4. Complete Application Fields with Accuracy and Judgment

- Read the entire form and instructions before entering information.
- Use the employer's requested date format, character limits, file type, and naming convention.
- Do not write 'See résumé' when the field requires a complete response.
- Distinguish required qualifications from preferred qualifications and answer only what is asked.
- Do not select Yes when the truthful answer is No or when experience is merely related rather than equivalent.
- Use an explanation field to clarify verified context concisely; do not argue with the question or add unrelated personal history.
- Review voluntary demographic questions and privacy notices separately from qualification questions. Practices and legal requirements vary by country.
- Before submission, compare every important fact with the master record and résumé.

Application prompt	Weak response	Stronger verified response
Describe scheduling experience.	I am excellent at scheduling.	Created and maintained a four-week shared schedule for a five-person course-project team and monitored agreed deadlines.

Application prompt	Weak response	Stronger verified response
Do you have two years of professional project coordination experience?	Yes, because I completed several projects in college.	No. If explanation is permitted: I have relevant course-project evidence in scheduling, status updates, and team follow-up, but I do not claim two years of professional experience.
Why are you interested in this position?	I need a job and your company looks good.	The role matches my verified experience organizing schedules, preparing progress information, and supporting team follow-up, and it offers a practical entry point into project operations.
Reason for leaving	Bad manager.	Position ended at completion of temporary assignment.

5. Write Messages with a Clear Employment Purpose

A job inquiry message asks whether an appropriate opportunity or conversation may be available. An application message accompanies a formal submission. A referral message identifies a genuine connection with permission. A follow-up message confirms continued interest or requests a reasonable status update. Each message should make one purpose clear, provide enough verified context, and respect the recipient's time.

Message type	Use it to	Essential elements
Job inquiry	Explore a credible employer or role when no suitable posting is confirmed.	Specific reason for contacting; concise qualification connection; reasonable request; contact information.
Application message	Accompany requested documents or an emailed application.	Exact position; submission purpose; two or three relevant evidence points; attached or linked items; professional closing.
Referral or introduction	Use an authentic connection after obtaining permission.	Accurate relationship; reason for contact; concise relevance; no implied endorsement beyond what was given.
Application follow-up	Confirm receipt or request an update after an appropriate interval.	Position and submission date; brief continued interest; respectful request; no pressure or repeated messaging.

Use a Five-Part Message Structure

Part	Question	Example
Subject	Can the recipient identify the purpose immediately?	Application - Project Coordinator - Leila LouMeena
Opening	Why are you writing to this person now?	I am submitting the requested materials for the Project Coordinator opening posted on the organization's career page.

Part	Question	Example
Connection	What verified evidence is most relevant?	My course-project and student-services experience includes schedule tracking, progress updates, organized records, and professional follow-up.
Request or next step	What reasonable action are you asking the recipient to take?	Please let me know if any additional information is required.
Closing	Does the message provide identity and contact information?	Thank you for your consideration. Leila LouMeena telephone email

6. Realistic Example

Leila locates a verified entry-level Project Coordinator opening through the employer's official career page. The posting requires an online application, résumé, brief response to two screening questions, and optional portfolio link. It does not request a separate cover letter. Leila does not upload extra documents merely because she has them.

She opens her saved master application record and compares it with the targeted résumé completed in Unit 1. The dates, education, student-services position, and course-project evidence agree. One screening question asks whether she has two years of professional project coordination experience. She answers No. In the permitted explanation field, she briefly identifies related course-project evidence without converting it into professional experience.

The application also asks for a short statement describing her fit. Leila writes a response that connects schedule tracking, weekly progress summaries, shared-file organization, and follow-up to the position's actual duties. She tests the portfolio link, previews the uploaded résumé, saves a copy of the final responses, submits once, records the confirmation number, and schedules one review date. She does not send a separate inquiry message because the formal application process is already clear.

Sample Application Response

Prompt: In 150 words or fewer, explain how your experience relates to this position.

Response: My experience relates most directly to schedule organization, progress communication, record accuracy, and follow-up. During a four-week senior course project, I created and maintained the shared schedule for a five-person team, recorded agreed responsibilities, prepared weekly progress summaries, and followed up when tasks were late. The team submitted its proposal on time and received strong evaluation for organization. As a student-services assistant, I also updated appointment records, answered routine questions, and referred students to the appropriate office while protecting private information. These experiences have prepared me to support project schedules, status information, shared documents, and team communication. I would bring careful organization, willingness to learn the employer's project systems, and responsibility for accurate follow-through.

Sample Application Email

Subject: Application - Project Coordinator - Leila LouMeena

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am submitting my application and résumé for the Project Coordinator position listed on your official career page. My verified experience includes maintaining a shared project schedule, preparing weekly

progress updates, organizing digital records, and following up on assigned work. The attached résumé provides further detail, and the application includes a link to permitted portfolio evidence.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if any additional information is required.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena
555-0100 | leila@example.com

Sample Job Inquiry Message

Subject: Inquiry About Entry-Level Project Support Opportunities

Dear Ms. Rivera:

I am writing because your organization's community programs regularly require careful scheduling, records, and team follow-up. I recently completed a business degree and have verified project evidence in maintaining a shared schedule, preparing progress updates, organizing digital files, and supporting student services. Although I did not find a current entry-level project-support opening on your career page, I would appreciate guidance on whether your organization anticipates related opportunities or offers an appropriate way to learn more about this work.

Thank you for your time. I have included my professional profile link below and would be glad to provide additional information if useful.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena
555-0100 | leila@example.com | linkedin.com/in/leilaloumeena

7. Digital and AI Applications

Application systems can help organize submissions but can also introduce errors through autofill, parsing, copied formatting, expired sessions, or mismatched versions. Save verified source information outside the form, but never store passwords, government identification numbers, banking details, or confidential documents in an unsecured tracker. Use a password manager or the security method appropriate to the system rather than recording credentials in the career portfolio.

AI may help the learner compare an anonymized draft with verified requirements, shorten a response to a character limit, identify contradictions, test tone, or generate questions requiring human review. It must not decide legal or eligibility answers, invent relationships or referrals, impersonate the applicant, create unsupported enthusiasm, or send messages without approval.

Sample prompt

Using only the verified job requirements and anonymized evidence I provide, review this 150-word application response. Identify: (1) any claim that lacks supplied evidence, (2) any important requirement not addressed, (3) repeated or vague wording, and (4) changes needed to meet the word limit. Do not add experience, credentials, results, relationships, or employer facts. Return questions separately from proposed edits.

8. Step-by-Step Demonstration

1. Verify the opening and process. Confirm the employer, position, source, closing date, required channel, and documents.
2. Save the instructions. Record required fields, screening questions, file types, naming rules, assessments, and deadlines.
3. Prepare the application package. Select the correct targeted résumé, verified evidence, permitted work samples, and current master record.

4. Complete fields accurately. Enter the requested information rather than relying on résumé upload or autofill.
5. Answer screening questions literally. Distinguish demonstrated, related, developing, unsupported, and unclear qualifications.
6. Write only the messages required by the situation. Define the recipient, purpose, evidence connection, request, and closing.
7. Protect information. Verify the destination and remove unnecessary private, confidential, or permission-restricted material.
8. Test the actual application. Preview uploads, pasted text, links, formatting, attachments, fields, and accessibility.
9. Review before submission. Compare names, dates, titles, claims, attachments, and answers with the evidence record and résumé.
10. Submit and preserve evidence. Record the date, confirmation, submitted version, follow-up point, and any new learning without repeatedly contacting the employer.

9. Guided Practice Activity

Practice Activity A: Build the Application Requirement Record

Verified requirement or instruction	My response or evidence	Source checked	Action before submission

Practice Activity B: Complete an Authentic Application

Using an actual verified posting, complete the employer's application or a faithful practice copy when submission is not yet appropriate. Enter every required field, answer the screening questions, attach the correct résumé, test each link or file, and record questions that require clarification. Do not submit a practice application to an employer merely to complete this activity.

Practice Activity C: Prepare Two Purposeful Messages

Prepare: (1) the message actually required for the selected application, and (2) one inquiry, referral, or follow-up message appropriate to a different verified situation. For each, identify the recipient, purpose, relevant evidence, requested next step, privacy check, and reason the timing is appropriate.

Practice Activity D: Review, Test, and Revise

- compare the application, résumé, messages, and evidence record for consistency;
- preview the actual uploaded and pasted content rather than reviewing only the source files;
- confirm that every attachment and link is correct, accessible, permitted, and relevant;
- ask a reviewer to identify one strength, one improvement need, and one next action;
- revise the package and record what changed and why; and
- preserve the final application record without saving account credentials or unnecessary sensitive data.

10. Check on Learning

1. What is the primary function of an employment application?

- A. Replace all employer interviews.
- B. Create the employer's required record of candidate information.
- C. Repeat the résumé word for word.
- D. Guarantee eligibility.

2. What should a candidate do when an application requires complete employment fields after a résumé upload?

- A. Write See résumé in every field.
- B. Complete the required fields accurately.
- C. Leave the fields blank.
- D. Upload several résumé versions.

3. Leila has related course-project experience but not two years of professional project coordination. How should she answer that literal screening question?

- A. Yes, because related experience is close enough.
- B. No, with a concise truthful clarification if the form permits it.
- C. Skip the application automatically.
- D. Ask AI to decide.

4. When is a job inquiry message appropriate?

- A. When the candidate has a specific credible reason to explore an employer or role and makes a reasonable request.
- B. After every formal application, immediately.
- C. When the recipient and organization cannot be verified.
- D. To demand an interview.

5. What should an application message add?

- A. A complete autobiography.
- B. A clear purpose and concise connection between verified evidence and the target.
- C. New qualifications absent from the résumé.
- D. Sensitive identity information.

6. What is the safest treatment of references?

- A. Provide anyone's contact information without asking.
- B. Obtain permission and confirm current contact information before use.
- C. Invent a reference when one is unavailable.
- D. Post reference information publicly.

7. Which AI use is responsible?

- A. Selecting Yes for an eligibility question.
- B. Inventing a referral relationship.
- C. Flagging possible contradictions in anonymized, verified material for the applicant to review.
- D. Sending a follow-up automatically.

8. What evidence should be preserved after submission?

- A. Passwords and banking information.
- B. The submitted version, date, confirmation, appropriate follow-up point, and learning record.
- C. Only the employer's logo.
- D. Unverified assumptions about the hiring decision.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. The application records candidate information in the structure required by the employer.
- 2 B. Upload does not replace required fields; the candidate must complete and verify them.
- 3 B. Related evidence may be explained, but it must not be converted into experience the applicant does not possess.
- 4 A. A useful inquiry has a verified context, defined purpose, concise relevance, and reasonable request.
- 5 B. The message should guide attention and explain purpose without contradicting or copying the résumé.
- 6 B. Permission and current information protect the reference and the applicant's credibility.
- 7 C. AI may support comparison and review when information is protected and the applicant makes every decision.
- 8 B. These records document exactly what occurred and support appropriate follow-up and later evaluation.

11. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I verified the employer, opening, application source, closing date, and submission channel.
- ☐ I saved and followed the employer's instructions, file requirements, and naming rules.
- ☐ Every required field is complete, accurate, and consistent with my résumé and records.
- ☐ I answered qualification and eligibility questions literally and did not overstate related experience.
- ☐ My application response connects verified evidence with the actual position requirements.
- ☐ Each message has a verified recipient, clear purpose, concise evidence connection, reasonable request, and professional closing.
- ☐ I did not imply a referral, relationship, permission, credential, or result that does not exist.
- ☐ References granted permission and their current information was confirmed before use.
- ☐ Attachments, links, pasted text, fields, and uploaded files were previewed and tested.
- ☐ I removed unnecessary sensitive information and protected confidential or restricted material.
- ☐ AI-supported suggestions were based on anonymized, verified information and personally reviewed.
- ☐ A reviewer identified a strength, an improvement need, and a next action.
- ☐ I revised the application package and recorded the reason for important changes.
- ☐ I preserved the submitted version, date, confirmation, and appropriate follow-up point without storing credentials.

12. Career Portfolio Product

Add an Application Package and Communication Record containing:

- the verified posting and saved application instructions;
- the completed application requirement record;
- a secure master application record or non-sensitive practice version;

- the final application responses and targeted résumé version;
- the required application message and one additional purposeful message;
- the attachment, link, field, privacy, and consistency test results;
- reviewer feedback and the revision record; and
- the submission date, confirmation, appropriate follow-up point, and next action.

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Job-search, application, and American Job Center resources sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Federal Trade Commission. Job Scams and guidance for recognizing fraudulent employment approaches. <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/job-scams>

USAJOBS Help Center. Application, document, and status guidance for federal employment. <https://help.usajobs.gov/how-to/application>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Job Applicants and the ADA. <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/job-applicants-and-ada>

For locations outside the United States, consult the employer's instructions, applicable labor and privacy authorities, public employment services, and lawful national application practices.

Transition to Unit 3

The résumé and application package communicate qualifications; the career portfolio preserves and demonstrates the evidence behind them. Unit 3 develops a purposeful digital career portfolio that supports applications and interviews without exposing private, confidential, or permission-restricted information.

Unit 3. Create a Digital Career Portfolio

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

A digital career portfolio is an organized, selective collection of verified evidence that supports a defined career purpose. It is not a storage place for every file a learner has created. It helps the learner connect claims in a résumé, application, or interview with work that can be examined, explained, and verified. The portfolio may remain private, be shared through controlled links, or be presented through a professional website or platform, depending on the employer's instructions and the learner's circumstances.

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- define the audience, purpose, and access level of a digital career portfolio;
- select evidence that is relevant, authentic, current, and safe to share;
- organize portfolio sections so an employer can locate important evidence efficiently;
- write context statements that explain the learner's own contribution, methods, and results;
- remove or protect private, confidential, proprietary, and permission-restricted information;
- apply basic accessibility, link, file-format, and account-security practices;
- use AI only to organize or review anonymized, verified material under human control; and
- build, test, evaluate, revise, and preserve a minimum viable career portfolio.

2. Understand What a Career Portfolio Must Accomplish

The portfolio serves three connected purposes. It helps the learner preserve evidence accumulated during the guide, choose evidence for a particular opportunity, and demonstrate performance when an employer requests or welcomes supporting material. A portfolio should make evidence easier to understand; it should not force an employer to search through folders, guess what a file demonstrates, or determine which work belongs to the applicant.

Portfolio purpose	Question	Result
Preserve	What verified evidence should I retain for future use?	A secure working collection with originals, records, feedback, and version history.
Select	Which evidence supports this target and audience?	A limited set of relevant artifacts connected to requirements.
Demonstrate	What can the reviewer learn about my performance?	Clear examples with context, personal contribution, method, result, and verification.
Develop	What gaps require new practice or evidence?	A focused plan for strengthening skills and producing credible work samples.

A private career folder and a shareable portfolio are related but not identical. The private folder may contain drafts, feedback, source records, application confirmations, and materials that cannot be distributed. The shareable portfolio contains only reviewed items appropriate for the intended audience.

3. Decide the Audience Purpose and Access Level

Begin with the decision the portfolio should support. A public portfolio may help a learner establish a professional presence. A controlled portfolio may support a particular application or interview. A private portfolio may organize evidence until sharing is necessary. Public visibility is not automatically better. The appropriate level depends on the occupation, employer process, confidentiality, safety, accessibility, and the learner's informed choice.

Access level	Appropriate use	Required control
Private working folder	Store originals, drafts, feedback, verification records, and sensitive administrative evidence.	Strong account security, limited permissions, organized backups, and no public link.
Controlled share	Provide selected evidence to a verified employer, reviewer, mentor, or interviewer.	Recipient-specific or restricted link, expiration when available, tested permissions, and only necessary content.
Public portfolio	Display professional work suitable for broad viewing when the occupation and learner benefit from it.	No private or confidential information; permission confirmed; contact exposure limited; accessibility and link maintenance planned.
Employer platform	Upload evidence through the employer's required application or assessment system.	Follow instructions, file limits, ownership terms, privacy notice, and deadline; retain an approved copy when permitted.

4. Select Evidence with Purpose

Every artifact should answer an employment-related question. A strong item may demonstrate a skill, clarify a claim, show improvement, document a result, or provide a work sample. The learner should be able to state why the item is included and which target requirement it supports.

Possible evidence	What it may demonstrate	Review before sharing
Project schedule or tracker	Planning, organization, follow-up, spreadsheet use	Names, internal dates, comments, formulas, and ownership or permission
Status report or meeting record	Written communication, synthesis, accountability	Confidential content, personal information, audience, and context
Presentation, video, or recording	Research, visual communication, speaking, facilitation	Copyright, participant consent, captions, transcript, audio and image quality
Writing or analysis sample	Reasoning, source use, professional writing, data interpretation	Accuracy, citations, confidential information, and whether collaboration is identified
Design, technical, or media product	Occupational methods, digital tools, problem solving, quality standards	License, ownership, accessibility, client or employer permission, and current compatibility
Certificate or feedback excerpt	Completion, development, external evaluation	Issuer accuracy, limits of the credential, reviewer permission, and private identifiers

Use the Five Evidence Tests

Test	Question
Relevant	Does the item support a target requirement or meaningful professional capability?
Authentic	Can I explain and verify what I personally did, including collaboration?
Understandable	Will a reviewer know the situation, task, action, tool or method, result, and significance?
Shareable	Do I own the item or have permission, and have I removed restricted or private information?
Usable	Does the file open, display, play, and remain accessible on a common device without unnecessary barriers?

5. Explain Each Artifact with an Evidence Context Statement

An artifact rarely explains itself. Add a short context statement that identifies the purpose of the work, the learner's responsibility, the method or tool used, the result, and the target skill demonstrated. When work was collaborative, identify the team's product and the learner's own contribution separately.

Element	Question	Leila's example
Title and date	What is the item and when was it completed?	Community Business Event Project Schedule - Spring 2026
Situation and purpose	What problem, assignment, or audience shaped the work?	A five-person senior project team had four weeks to prepare a community-event proposal.
Personal contribution	What did I personally do?	Leila created and maintained the shared schedule, recorded agreed responsibilities, and prepared weekly progress summaries.
Tool or method	How was the work completed?	Spreadsheet schedule, shared files, weekly review, and respectful follow-up.
Result and evidence	What occurred and what can support the claim?	The team submitted on time and received strong evaluation for organization; schedule and feedback excerpt retained.
Target connection	Why is the item included?	Demonstrates schedule tracking, status communication, digital organization, and follow-through for project-support work.

Sample Evidence Context Statement

Community Business Event Project Schedule - Spring 2026. A five-person team had four weeks to prepare a proposal for a community-business event. I created and maintained the shared schedule, recorded responsibilities after team agreement, prepared weekly progress summaries, and followed up when two tasks were late. I used a spreadsheet and shared-file system to keep dates and documents current. The team submitted the proposal on time and received strong evaluation for organization. This sample demonstrates schedule tracking, progress communication, digital organization, and accountable follow-through. Names and private comments have been removed, and the instructor authorized use of the selected feedback excerpt.

6. Organize a Minimum Viable Career Portfolio

A beginning portfolio should be small enough to review and strong enough to support the target. Five to eight carefully selected items usually teach more than a large collection without explanation. The precise number depends on the field, employer instructions, and quality of evidence. Do not add weak items merely to reach a number.

Portfolio section	Purpose	Possible content
Professional introduction	Identify the target and the value the learner is prepared to contribute.	Name, target role, brief evidence-based profile, professional contact method
Selected evidence	Demonstrate the few capabilities most important to the target.	Projects, reports, trackers, presentations, media, technical products, writing or analysis
Evidence context	Explain each item and the learner's contribution.	Situation, task, action, method, result, verification, target connection
Education and development	Show relevant preparation without overstating credentials.	Degree, relevant study, certificates of completion, current training, development priorities
Résumé and contact	Provide the correct career document and a reasonable next step.	Current targeted résumé, professional profile link, accessible contact method
Optional supporting section	Add only material useful to the field and audience.	Recommendations with permission, awards, publications, service, or professional affiliations

Suggested Folder Structure

- 01 Career Direction and Target
- 02 Résumés and Applications
- 03 Evidence Originals - Private
- 04 Evidence Approved for Sharing
- 05 Context Statements and Captions
- 06 Feedback Permissions and Verification
- 07 Portfolio Exports Links and Test Records
- 08 Development Priorities and New Work Samples

Use clear filenames such as LeilaLouMeena_ProjectSchedule_Shareable_2026-09 rather than final, new final, or document1. Keep original files separate from redacted or shareable copies so that later revisions do not accidentally expose restricted information.

7. Protect Privacy Permission and Ownership

Before sharing any item, identify who created it, who appears in it, what information it contains, and what permission or restriction applies. Course ownership rules, employer policies, client agreements, copyright, and privacy law vary. When rights are uncertain, do not publish the item. Seek permission, create a lawful redacted excerpt, prepare a new demonstration sample, or describe the capability without distributing the original.

Risk	Unsafe action	Responsible alternative
Personal information	Post names, email addresses, grades, signatures, IDs, or private comments.	Remove unnecessary identifiers and verify the redacted copy before sharing.
Team contribution	Present the full team product as individual work.	Credit the team and state the learner's personal contribution precisely.
Employer or client material	Upload internal reports, data, images, or systems without permission.	Use an authorized excerpt, a recreated demonstration with synthetic data, or a general description.
Copyrighted content	Copy an article, image, music, code, template, or design without rights.	Link lawfully, cite appropriately, obtain permission, or use original or licensed material.
Recommendations	Publish another person's words and contact information automatically.	Obtain explicit permission for the quotation, audience, contact method, and duration.
AI-generated material	Present generated output as proof of personal performance.	Identify the learner's verified contribution and preserve process evidence; follow applicable disclosure rules.

8. Apply Accessibility Security and Quality Controls

A portfolio should work for the intended reviewer and protect the learner. Use meaningful headings, readable contrast, descriptive link text, alternative text for informative images, captions and transcripts for relevant media, accessible documents, and simple navigation. Do not rely on color alone to communicate meaning. Offer a common downloadable format when appropriate and test the portfolio with keyboard navigation and built-in accessibility checks.

Protect the account with a unique password and multifactor authentication when available. Review sharing permissions, remove access when no longer needed, and test links in a signed-out or private browser window. Maintain a safe backup of the private working folder. Do not place passwords, access codes, identity records, or confidential source files in a portfolio index or public folder.

Quality control	Test
Identity and purpose	The name, target, professional profile, and next contact action are clear.
Navigation	Headings, order, filenames, menus, and back links help the reviewer locate evidence quickly.
Accessibility	Text, contrast, links, images, media, and documents are usable through appropriate accessible alternatives.
Technical function	Every file opens, every link reaches the intended item, and permissions work for the intended audience.
Privacy and permission	Only approved, necessary information is visible; redactions cannot be reversed through an underlying file.
Currency	Résumé, contact information, target, evidence, dates, and links represent the current approved version.
Mobile and print view	Important content remains readable on a common phone-sized screen and in a reasonable printed or PDF view when needed.

Offline and Portable Portfolio Options

A portfolio does not have to depend on continuous internet access. Learners may maintain an organized local career folder, prepare a selected PDF portfolio packet, carry a printed presentation set, or keep an encrypted portable-storage copy when appropriate. These formats can support interviews, locations with limited connectivity, accessibility needs, platform interruptions, and employer requests for attachments or printed evidence.

The offline version requires the same selection, truthfulness, privacy, permission, and accessibility controls as an online portfolio. Store private originals separately from the shareable packet; use clear filenames and dates; scan printed pages for exposed identifiers; encrypt portable media that contains protected material; and keep a reliable offline backup in a secure location. Before an interview, open every file without internet access and confirm that links are either unnecessary or accompanied by usable exported content.

9. Realistic Example

Leila begins with the digital career folder created at the start of the guide. It contains assessment results, occupational research, job descriptions, skill evidence, several résumé versions, application responses, feedback, and project files. She does not publish the folder. Instead, she creates a separate controlled portfolio for entry-level project-support applications.

Her first selection contains six items: a professional introduction, targeted résumé, redacted project schedule, one-page project-status report, spreadsheet tracker created for practice, and a short project reflection with permitted instructor feedback. Each artifact includes a context statement. The team schedule identifies Leila's contribution and credits the collaborative project. Classmates' names, private comments, grades, and unrelated assignment instructions are removed from the shareable copy.

Leila organizes the items in the order an employer is likely to use them: introduction and résumé first, followed by schedule and status evidence, spreadsheet evidence, and the brief reflection. She adds descriptive links, alternative text where needed, and a transcript for a short narrated explanation. She activates multifactor authentication, restricts the portfolio link, and tests it in a signed-out browser window on a computer and phone. Her reviewer finds one unclear link and one context statement that overemphasizes the team's result. Leila revises both before using the portfolio.

Leila's Portfolio Evidence Map

Target requirement	Portfolio evidence	Leila's verified contribution	Control before sharing
Maintain schedules	Redacted project schedule	Created schedule, recorded agreed assignments, monitored deadlines	Remove names and comments; retain instructor permission
Communicate status	One-page status report	Summarized progress, late actions, next steps, and decisions	Use a recreated practice report without private class information
Use spreadsheets	Project or application tracker	Organized fields, checked completeness, used formulas or filters appropriately	Replace real employer and contact data with clearly labeled synthetic entries

Target requirement	Portfolio evidence	Leila's verified contribution	Control before sharing
Organize documents	Portfolio structure and file index	Applied consistent naming, versions, folders, and descriptive links	Test permissions and signed-out access
Follow through	Context statement and feedback excerpt	Explained action taken when tasks were late and revision made after feedback	Credit team and obtain permission for quoted feedback

10. Digital Tools and Responsible AI Use

Digital tools may support file storage, website creation, document conversion, media captioning, accessibility checking, permission management, link testing, analytics, and backup. Select tools according to purpose, privacy, accessibility, cost, reliability, export options, and the learner's ability to maintain the portfolio. Avoid building a portfolio that depends on a platform the learner cannot control or afford to keep current.

AI may help group verified artifacts by target skill, identify missing context fields, propose clearer filenames, compare a portfolio index with verified job requirements, or flag possible privacy questions for human review. It must not invent artifacts, results, feedback, permissions, clients, collaborators, credentials, or work history. It should not receive confidential files, private identifiers, or employer-restricted information. AI-generated descriptions must be checked against the actual evidence and revised into the learner's authentic explanation.

Sample prompt

Using only the anonymized artifact descriptions and verified job requirements I provide, create a proposed evidence map with these columns: target requirement, possible artifact, evidence already demonstrated, context information still needed, privacy or permission question, and test before sharing. Do not invent work, results, ownership, permission, feedback, or skills. Label every missing fact as a question for me to answer.

11. Step-by-Step Demonstration

1. Define the audience and decision. Identify the target role, likely reviewer, and what the portfolio should help the reviewer determine.
2. Choose the access level. Decide what remains private, what may be shared through controlled access, and whether any public section is justified.
3. Inventory the evidence. List the products, records, feedback, and work samples already collected in the career folder.
4. Apply the five evidence tests. Evaluate relevance, authenticity, understandability, shareability, and usability.
5. Select the minimum viable collection. Choose a small set of strong items that together address the target's most important requirements.
6. Prepare shareable copies. Preserve originals, remove restricted information, obtain permission, and create lawful demonstration samples when necessary.
7. Write context statements. Explain the situation, personal contribution, method, result, verification, and target connection for every artifact.
8. Organize and label the portfolio. Use meaningful sections, filenames, dates, descriptions, and navigation.
9. Apply accessibility and security controls. Add appropriate alternatives, secure the account, limit permissions, and protect backups.

10. Test with a reviewer. Check content, accuracy, ownership, privacy, accessibility, links, permissions, mobile view, and the clarity of each claim.
11. Revise and preserve. Correct problems, record the approved version and access level, and establish a schedule for link and content review.

12. Guided Practice Activity

Practice Activity A: Complete the Portfolio Evidence Inventory

Artifact or record	Target skill or requirement	My contribution and evidence	Access decision and required action
			Private / Controlled / Public; action: _____
			Private / Controlled / Public; action: _____
			Private / Controlled / Public; action: _____
			Private / Controlled / Public; action: _____

Practice Activity B: Prepare Three Evidence Context Statements

For three selected artifacts, write a context statement identifying title and date, situation and purpose, personal contribution, tool or method, result and verification, target connection, and permission or privacy status. If the item was collaborative, distinguish team performance from personal contribution.

Practice Activity C: Build the Minimum Viable Portfolio

Create a functioning private or controlled portfolio containing a professional introduction, current targeted résumé, three to five selected evidence items, context statements, relevant education or development information, and a professional contact method. Use actual verified material when it is safe and permitted. Otherwise, create a clearly labeled practice or demonstration item that does not disclose restricted information.

Practice Activity D: Conduct the Signed-Out Portfolio Test

- open every link and file in a signed-out or private browser window;
- test intended and unintended access permissions;
- review the portfolio on a computer and phone-sized display;
- check headings, descriptive links, alternative text, captions or transcripts, contrast, and accessible documents;
- verify ownership, permission, redaction, authorship, dates, claims, and collaboration credit;
- ask a reviewer to identify one strength, one improvement need, and one next action;
- revise the portfolio and record what changed and why; and
- save the approved version, access level, review date, and next maintenance date.

13. Check on Learning

1. What distinguishes a shareable portfolio from a private career folder?

- A. The shareable portfolio contains every original record.
- B. The shareable portfolio contains selected, reviewed evidence appropriate for the audience.
- C. The private folder must be public.
- D. There is no difference.

2. What should determine whether an artifact is included?

- A. Its decorative appearance alone.
- B. Its relevance, authenticity, understandability, shareability, and usability.
- C. The number of files already collected.
- D. Whether AI generated it quickly.

3. How should collaborative work be presented?

- A. Claim the complete result individually.
- B. Credit the collaboration and describe the learner's own contribution accurately.
- C. Remove all mention of the team.
- D. Add a larger title.

4. What is the safest response when employer or client permission is uncertain?

- A. Publish first and ask later.
- B. Do not publish; seek permission or prepare a lawful alternative.
- C. Hide the name but keep all data.
- D. Ask AI to approve it.

5. Why does each artifact need a context statement?

- A. To increase word count.
- B. To explain the work, personal contribution, method, result, and target connection.
- C. To replace the artifact.
- D. To promise employer approval.

6. Which is an appropriate accessibility practice?

- A. Use color alone to show meaning.
- B. Provide descriptive links, alternatives for informative images, and captions or transcripts for relevant media.
- C. Post image-only text.
- D. Remove headings.

7. Which AI use is responsible?

- A. Inventing a client project.
- B. Creating permission that was never granted.
- C. Organizing anonymized, verified artifact descriptions and identifying questions for human review.
- D. Uploading confidential files for automatic publication.

8. What should the signed-out portfolio test verify?

- A. Only the learner's ability to sign in.
- B. Links, files, permissions, accessibility, display, privacy, and the intended reviewer experience.
- C. Whether every file is public.

D. Whether the portfolio guarantees an interview.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. The working folder may contain private originals and drafts; the shareable portfolio contains only audience-appropriate evidence.
- 2 B. These five tests connect selection with employment purpose, truthfulness, permission, and technical usefulness.
- 3 B. Accurate credit protects credibility and helps the reviewer understand the applicant's performance.
- 4 B. Uncertainty is not permission; the learner should obtain authorization or use a lawful alternative.
- 5 B. Context turns a file into understandable evidence and clarifies the learner's own contribution.
- 6 B. These practices reduce barriers and make portfolio meaning available through more than one form.
- 7 C. AI may organize verified, protected input and identify questions, but it cannot create evidence or permission.
- 8 B. The test evaluates the portfolio as the intended reviewer will actually encounter it.

14. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ My portfolio identifies a defined target, audience, purpose, and appropriate access level.
- ☐ The shareable portfolio is separate from private originals, drafts, and administrative records.
- ☐ Each selected item supports an important target requirement or professional capability.
- ☐ I can verify the authenticity, date, result, and my personal contribution for every item.
- ☐ Collaborative work credits others and distinguishes team results from my own actions.
- ☐ Every artifact includes a concise and accurate evidence context statement.
- ☐ I own the material or have documented permission for the intended use and audience.
- ☐ Personal, confidential, proprietary, copyrighted, and permission-restricted information is protected.
- ☐ Redacted or demonstration copies cannot reveal the protected source information.
- ☐ Headings, navigation, filenames, dates, descriptions, and target connections are consistent.
- ☐ Informative images, links, media, and documents include appropriate accessible alternatives.
- ☐ Account security, multifactor authentication, backup, and sharing permissions are appropriate.
- ☐ Every link, file, permission, and contact method works in a signed-out test.
- ☐ The portfolio remains readable on a common computer and phone-sized display.
- ☐ AI-supported organization or wording used only anonymized, verified information and was personally reviewed.
- ☐ A reviewer identified one strength, one improvement need, and one next action.
- ☐ I revised the portfolio and recorded the approved version, access level, and next review date.

15. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Minimum Viable Digital Career Portfolio and Portfolio Control Record containing:

- the target audience, purpose, and access-level decision;
- the completed portfolio evidence inventory and selection decisions;
- a professional introduction and current targeted résumé;

- three to five selected evidence items with context statements;
- permission, ownership, privacy, collaboration, and redaction records as applicable;
- the accessibility, device, link, file, and signed-out permission test results;
- reviewer feedback and the revision record; and
- the approved portfolio location or export, version date, maintenance date, and next action.

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Career planning, résumé, job-search, and skills resources sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Multifactor authentication and account-security guidance. <https://www.cisa.gov/secure-our-world/use-strong-passwords>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined. <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative. Accessibility standards, strategies, and resources for images, documents, links, and multimedia. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable privacy, copyright, employment, institutional, and professional requirements before sharing portfolio evidence.

Transition to Unit 4

The résumé, application package, and digital career portfolio now present and support the learner's qualifications. Unit 4 examines how to adapt these materials for different opportunities without changing facts, hiding limitations, inventing evidence, or allowing AI to misrepresent the applicant.

Unit 4. Adapt Materials Without Misrepresenting Yourself

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

Employers differ in their responsibilities, language, priorities, application systems, and evidence requirements. Effective applicants adapt the emphasis and organization of their materials so the most relevant verified qualifications are easy to recognize. Adaptation is not permission to improve the facts. The résumé, application, inquiry message, and portfolio must remain accurate, supportable, and consistent with the learner's evidence record.

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- distinguish truthful adaptation from omission, exaggeration, fabrication, and deceptive keyword matching;
- analyze a verified opportunity and identify its priority requirements, terminology, instructions, and evidence needs;
- adapt the summary, order, examples, wording, and portfolio selection without changing underlying facts;
- use equivalent occupational language only when it accurately describes the learner's verified experience;
- maintain a master evidence record and a controlled version history across applications;
- identify and resolve inconsistencies among the résumé, application, portfolio, professional profile, and interview preparation;
- use digital tools and AI to compare and review anonymized verified information without creating qualifications; and
- produce and evaluate a truthful opportunity-specific application package.

2. Understand the Boundary Between Adaptation and Misrepresentation

Truthful adaptation changes how relevant evidence is selected, ordered, and explained.

Misrepresentation changes or conceals a material fact in a way that may create a false impression. A learner should be able to trace every claim in an adapted document to a verified source in the career folder and explain it consistently when questioned.

May adapt truthfully	Must not change or invent
Order of sections, skills, bullets, and portfolio items	Dates, duration, employment status, attendance, or availability
Summary and objective for the verified target	Job titles, level of authority, supervisory responsibility, or scope
Relevant examples selected from the evidence record	Degrees, licenses, certifications, grades, awards, or completion status
Plain-language or equivalent occupational terminology	Tools, languages, methods, results, clients, employers, or projects not supported by evidence
Length and detail to follow instructions	Authorship, ownership, permissions, references, or another person's contribution
Portfolio access and artifacts appropriate to the audience	Work eligibility, location, salary history, background information, or answers to required questions

Leaving out irrelevant detail is often appropriate. Leaving out information to make a direct required answer false or materially misleading is not. When a question is unclear, the learner should seek clarification, provide a brief accurate explanation when the system allows it, or ask a qualified adviser about applicable requirements.

3. Analyze the Opportunity Before Editing

Adaptation begins with a real, verified opportunity—not a generic list of popular keywords. Confirm the employer, role, source, closing date, instructions, required documents, minimum qualifications, preferred qualifications, duties, working conditions, and contact process. Separate what is required from what is preferred and what is merely descriptive.

Analysis field	Question	Record
Source and legitimacy	Is the opportunity current and connected to a verified employer or authorized recruiter?	URL or source, employer, contact channel, date checked
Instructions	What format, questions, attachments, limits, and deadline must be followed?	Submission checklist and deadline
Priority requirements	Which qualifications and duties appear essential or repeated?	Exact requirement plus evidence status
Terminology	Which occupation-specific words accurately match my verified experience?	Employer term and truthful equivalent
Evidence gaps	What is missing, uncertain, or not yet demonstrated?	Clarify, develop, disclose accurately, or do not claim
Decision	Is this opportunity suitable enough to justify an application?	Apply, investigate further, prepare for later, or decline

4. Build a Truthful Adaptation Matrix

A matrix prevents hurried wording changes from becoming unsupported claims. Copy the important requirement, identify the learner's strongest verified evidence, decide how the evidence should appear, and record any limit that must remain visible.

Target requirement	Verified evidence	Truthful adaptation	Limit or gap
Maintain schedules and deadlines	Created and maintained a four-week team schedule; monitored late tasks	Move schedule-tracking bullet earlier and use employer's accurate term 'deadline tracking'	Academic team project, not paid employment
Prepare status updates	Prepared weekly summaries of progress and next actions	Feature status-summary example in résumé and portfolio	No executive-reporting experience
Use office spreadsheets	Built trackers; used formulas, filters, and completeness checks	List the specific verified spreadsheet functions and link the approved sample	Do not claim advanced analytics
Coordinate multiple stakeholders	Recorded agreed responsibilities and followed up with team members	Describe team coordination and respectful follow-up	Did not supervise or manage staff

5. Adapt Each Component Consistently

Component	Appropriate adaptation	Consistency check
Résumé	Revise summary; reorder verified skills and bullets; select relevant achievements; use accurate equivalent terminology.	Facts, dates, titles, scope, and results match the master record and application.

Component	Appropriate adaptation	Consistency check
Application form	Answer every required question directly; use the requested format; explain accurately when space permits.	Entries match the résumé and official records; no field is guessed.
Inquiry or cover message	Connect two or three verified qualifications with the employer's needs and state a clear next step.	No copied employer language falsely presented as personal experience.
Career portfolio	Select and order approved artifacts for the target; adjust context statements to explain relevance.	Artifact, authorship, collaboration, permissions, and results remain unchanged.
Professional profile	Keep public information current enough that major facts do not conflict with submitted materials.	Differences in detail do not create contradictory dates, titles, credentials, or status.
Interview preparation	Prepare examples that support the adapted claims and acknowledge limits honestly.	The learner can explain every claim without adding facts after submission.

6. Use Keywords and Equivalent Language Responsibly

Employer terminology can help a reviewer recognize relevant experience, but a matching word is not evidence. Use a term only when its ordinary occupational meaning fits what the learner actually did and the learner can explain the underlying task. If a term implies greater authority, complexity, independence, or expertise than the evidence supports, choose a more precise description.

Employer language	Evidence-based wording	Inflated wording to avoid
Project coordination	Maintained a team schedule, recorded agreed responsibilities, and prepared weekly status summaries	Managed enterprise projects
Stakeholder communication	Shared progress updates with team members and an instructor	Directed executive stakeholder relations
Data management	Checked student-service records for completeness and corrected approved fields	Administered organizational databases
Leadership	Facilitated a meeting segment and followed up on assigned actions	Supervised a five-person staff

7. Realistic Example: Leila Adapts Without Changing the Facts

Leila's master résumé targets entry-level project-support work. She finds an operations assistant opening that emphasizes schedule updates, record accuracy, spreadsheets, status communication, and follow-through. She verifies the employer and instructions, then compares each priority with her evidence record.

Leila changes her summary from a broad project-support statement to an operations-support statement. She moves her student-services record-accuracy example and spreadsheet skills higher, selects the project schedule and status report for her controlled portfolio, and uses the employer's phrase 'deadline tracking' because it accurately describes her documented work. She does not

change her project into paid employment, rename herself as a project manager, claim staff supervision, or add software she has not used.

Her application form continues to identify the project as academic team experience and her student-services position exactly as recorded. Before submission, she checks dates, role descriptions, education, contact information, and results across every component. The adapted package is more relevant than the master version, but its facts are identical.

Before and After: Relevant Emphasis, Same Evidence

Master wording	Adapted wording	Why it remains truthful
Supported a five-person project team by maintaining a shared schedule and preparing weekly updates.	Maintained a four-week team schedule, tracked agreed deadlines, and prepared weekly status summaries for a five-person academic project.	Adds verified context and accurate target terminology; does not change setting or responsibility.
Checked records and used spreadsheets in student services.	Reviewed student-service records for completeness and maintained accurate spreadsheet entries under established procedures.	Clarifies the verified task and its limits; does not claim database administration.
Entry-level project-support candidate with organization and communication skills.	Entry-level operations-support candidate offering verified schedule tracking, record accuracy, spreadsheet use, and status communication.	Changes target and emphasis using evidence already documented.

8. Control Versions and Preserve the Evidence Trail

Keep one protected master evidence record rather than repeatedly editing the only copy of a résumé or portfolio. Create a dated application folder for each verified opportunity and preserve the exact materials submitted. A version log helps the learner reproduce answers, prepare for interviews, correct errors, and avoid conflicting claims.

Version-control field	Example
Employer, role, and source	Harbor Community Services — Operations Assistant — employer careers page
Opportunity checked	September 13, 2026; instructions and closing date verified
Files submitted	Résumé v2026-09-13; application response; controlled portfolio PDF
Adaptations made	Operations summary; record-accuracy example moved earlier; two portfolio items selected
Facts verified against	Master evidence record, academic project files, student-services employment record
Open questions or limits	No staff supervision; no advanced analytics claim; portfolio access expires after review
Submission record	Date, confirmation, contact channel, and follow-up date

9. Digital Tools and Responsible AI Use

Digital tools may support side-by-side comparison, version naming, file conversion, tracked review, accessibility checks, consistency checks, and application records. Keep a master file read-only or protected, use dated filenames, and preserve the submitted version. Do not depend on automatic form filling without reviewing every field, because an incorrect saved value can be repeated across applications.

AI may help organize verified requirements, compare anonymized résumé text with an opportunity, identify where evidence is missing, suggest clearer wording, or locate possible inconsistencies for human review. AI must not invent experience, infer unverified proficiency, alter dates or titles, answer eligibility or background questions for the learner, or convert a limitation into a false qualification. Do not upload private, confidential, proprietary, or personally identifying information without authorization and an appropriate privacy assessment.

Sample prompt

Compare only the anonymized opportunity requirements and verified evidence I provide. Create a table with: requirement, exact supporting evidence, possible truthful wording, limitation that must remain visible, and question requiring my decision. Do not invent or infer experience, dates, titles, credentials, results, authority, software proficiency, eligibility, or permission. Mark every unsupported requirement as a gap.

10. Step-by-Step Demonstration

1. Verify the opportunity. Confirm the employer, source, status, deadline, instructions, and requested materials.
2. Preserve the master record. Work from a dated copy and keep verified facts, source documents, and prior submissions intact.
3. Analyze requirements. Separate required and preferred qualifications, duties, terminology, evidence requests, and working conditions.
4. Complete the adaptation matrix. Match each priority with exact evidence, a truthful wording decision, and any limit or gap.
5. Decide whether to apply. Consider fit, required qualifications, feasibility, learner priorities, and unresolved concerns.
6. Adapt the résumé. Revise emphasis, order, examples, and accurate terminology while preserving all underlying facts.
7. Adapt the message and portfolio. Connect verified strengths to the target and select approved evidence appropriate to the audience.
8. Complete the application directly. Follow instructions and verify every entry rather than relying on imported or automatically generated answers.
9. Run the consistency audit. Compare names, contact details, dates, titles, credentials, status, duties, results, eligibility answers, and links across components.
10. Conduct the evidence test. Highlight every claim and identify the record, artifact, or person that could verify it.
11. Review accessibility, privacy, and permissions. Test files, links, formats, redactions, and access level.
12. Save and record the submission. Preserve the exact package, confirmation, adaptations, open questions, and follow-up date.

11. Guided Practice Activity

Practice Activity A: Complete an Opportunity Analysis

Priority requirement or instruction	Evidence status	Truthful wording or action	Limit, gap, or question
	Verified / Partial / Gap		
	Verified / Partial / Gap		
	Verified / Partial / Gap		
	Verified / Partial / Gap		

Practice Activity B: Adapt Three Components

Create a target-specific résumé summary, one revised evidence bullet, and one portfolio-selection decision. Beside each change, cite the verified source and state what fact or limitation must remain unchanged.

Practice Activity C: Conduct the Cross-Document Consistency Audit

- compare the résumé, application form, inquiry or cover message, portfolio, professional profile, and master evidence record;
- verify name, contact information, dates, titles, employment and education status, credentials, duties, results, and eligibility answers;
- mark every difference as acceptable detail, required correction, or question needing clarification;
- confirm that team results and personal contributions are distinguished;
- open every attachment and link, review redactions and permissions, and test the submitted file names; and
- save the reviewed package and complete the version-control record.

12. Check on Learning

1. Which change is truthful adaptation?

- A. Changing an academic project into paid employment.
- B. Moving a verified schedule-tracking bullet earlier for a role that prioritizes deadlines.
- C. Adding software listed by the employer but never used.
- D. Replacing a team result with an individual claim.

2. When may employer terminology be used?

- A. Whenever it improves keyword matching.
- B. Only when its meaning accurately describes verified evidence the learner can explain.
- C. Only in a hidden section.
- D. When AI suggests it.

3. What should happen to a requirement with no supporting evidence?

- A. Mark it as a gap and do not claim it.
- B. Add it as a developing expert skill.
- C. Copy it into the résumé.
- D. Ask a friend to verify it.

4. Why preserve the exact submitted version?

- A. To increase the number of files.
- B. To prepare consistently, document what was represented, and resolve later questions.
- C. To avoid reading the posting.
- D. To make every application identical.

5. Which statement correctly describes collaborative work?

- A. I managed five employees.
- B. Our team completed the project; I maintained the schedule and prepared weekly summaries.
- C. I independently completed every team task.
- D. I supervised all stakeholders.

6. What is an appropriate AI-supported action?

- A. Inventing a result to match a requirement.
- B. Comparing anonymized verified evidence with requirements and marking unsupported areas as gaps.
- C. Answering work-eligibility questions automatically.
- D. Uploading confidential records without authorization.

7. What does a consistency audit compare?

- A. Only fonts and colors.
- B. Material facts and claims across the résumé, application, message, portfolio, profile, and evidence record.
- C. Only the job title.
- D. The learner with other applicants.

8. What is the correct response to an unclear required question?

- A. Guess what the employer prefers.
- B. Seek clarification or provide an accurate explanation when possible; do not invent an answer.
- C. Leave every form blank.
- D. Let automatic form filling decide.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. Reordering verified evidence changes emphasis, not facts.
- 2 B. A keyword is responsible only when its occupational meaning matches evidence the learner can support.
- 3 A. A gap guides an honest decision or development plan; it is not a qualification.
- 4 B. The submitted version supports accurate follow-up, interview preparation, and accountability.
- 5 B. This wording credits the team and identifies the learner's own verified contribution.
- 6 B. AI may organize protected, verified input and identify gaps under human review.
- 7 B. The audit prevents material contradictions across the full application package.
- 8 B. Clarification and accurate explanation protect the learner from creating a false answer.

13. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I verified the employer, opportunity source, status, instructions, deadline, and requested materials.
- ☐ I separated required qualifications, preferred qualifications, duties, terminology, and evidence requests.
- ☐ Every adapted claim traces to a verified source in my master evidence record.
- ☐ I changed emphasis, order, examples, or accurate terminology without changing underlying facts.
- ☐ Dates, titles, credentials, results, status, authorship, authority, and eligibility answers remain accurate.
- ☐ Employer terminology accurately describes what I did and does not inflate responsibility or proficiency.
- ☐ Team results and my personal contribution are identified separately.
- ☐ Unsupported requirements are marked as gaps rather than copied into my materials.
- ☐ The résumé, application, message, portfolio, profile, and interview examples are materially consistent.
- ☐ I followed file, length, question, attachment, and submission instructions.
- ☐ Portfolio items remain authentic, permitted, appropriately redacted, accessible, and relevant.
- ☐ Automatically imported or generated application entries were personally checked.
- ☐ AI received only appropriate anonymized information and did not invent or infer qualifications.
- ☐ A reviewer challenged unclear, inflated, unsupported, or inconsistent wording.
- ☐ I corrected all identified problems before submission.
- ☐ I preserved the exact submitted package, confirmation, version record, and follow-up date.

14. Career Portfolio Product

Add a Truthful Adaptation Package containing:

- the verified opportunity record, instructions, and priority-requirement analysis;
- the completed truthful adaptation matrix with evidence, wording, limits, gaps, and questions;
- the adapted résumé, application responses, inquiry or cover message, and selected portfolio index as applicable;
- a cross-document consistency audit and evidence-source check;
- the accessibility, privacy, permission, attachment, link, and file-format review;
- reviewer feedback and corrections made before submission; and
- the version-control record, exact submitted package, confirmation, follow-up date, and next action.

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Résumé, job-search, and application guidance sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined, including communication, professionalism, technology, and career and self-development. <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

USAJOBS. Guidance on preparing a résumé and applying through a structured employer system. <https://help.usajobs.gov/how-to/account/documents/resume/>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Applicant and employee rights and responsibilities under federal employment-discrimination laws. <https://www.eeoc.gov/employees-job-applicants>

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable employment, privacy, accessibility, credential, and application requirements.

Transition to Unit 5

The learner now has a truthful, relevant, and supported application package: resume, application responses, inquiry communication, career portfolio, and controlled adaptations for a verified opportunity. Unit 5 explains how to follow up appropriately, interpret application results, and use the evidence to decide the next action.

Unit 5. Follow Up and Evaluate Application Results

1. Purpose and Performance Outcomes

Submitting an application is not the end of the job-search task. The learner must preserve the submission record, respect the employer's process, follow up only when appropriate, interpret responses carefully, and use results to improve future decisions. Professional follow-up demonstrates organization and continued interest; excessive or poorly timed contact can weaken the application. Evaluation turns each result—including no response—into evidence for the next action without treating a single employer decision as a judgment of the learner's worth.

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- record the exact application, confirmation, contact channel, stated timeline, and next review date;
- determine whether, when, how, and with whom an application follow-up is appropriate;
- write a concise and professional follow-up message based on verified information;
- respond appropriately to acknowledgments, requests, invitations, delays, rejections, and suspected fraud;
- protect personal information and avoid repeated, automated, or manipulative contact;
- evaluate application activity, quality, responses, and conversion patterns without drawing unsupported conclusions;
- revise the job-search plan and materials when the evidence indicates a specific improvement need; and
- maintain a complete application follow-up and results record in the career portfolio.

2. Distinguish Follow-Up from Repeated Contact

Follow-up is a purposeful communication connected to an actual application, employer instruction, referral, or prior conversation. Its purpose may be to confirm a requested item, express continued interest, provide an authorized update, respond to an employer, or ask one reasonable process question. It should not pressure the employer, demand a decision, repeat information already received, or attempt to bypass the stated selection process.

Responsible follow-up	Contact to avoid
Follow the timeline or contact instruction provided by the employer.	Contact several employees repeatedly because no timeline was provided.
Use the authorized channel and one verified recipient.	Send the same message through email, telephone, social media, and messaging platforms.
Identify the position, submission date, purpose, and requested next action briefly.	Send a generic message that makes the employer search for the application.
Provide a requested correction or relevant update accurately.	Add new claims, create urgency, or imply another offer that does not exist.
Record the contact and wait reasonably for the process to continue.	Follow up daily or use automated sequences without human review.

3. Determine Whether Follow-Up Is Appropriate

Begin with the employer's instructions. If the posting, confirmation, portal, or recruiter states that applicants should not contact the organization, respect that direction. If a decision timeline is provided, wait until it has passed unless the employer asks for information. When no guidance exists, consider

the occupation, urgency, application method, established relationship, and normal communication practices before sending one concise inquiry.

Situation	Appropriate action	Reason
Confirmation received with a stated review date	Record it and wait until the stated period has passed.	The employer has already defined the process.
Employer requests a document or correction	Respond promptly through the requested channel and confirm completion.	This is a required response, not an unsolicited status inquiry.
Application portal shows a current status	Use the portal unless an authorized contact invites communication.	The system may be the employer's designated source.
No timeline and no prohibition on contact	After a reasonable interval, send one brief inquiry to a verified contact when appropriate.	A limited inquiry may clarify status without creating pressure.
Referral contact offered to help	Thank the person, follow the agreed process, and do not ask for influence beyond the relationship.	Permission and boundaries protect trust.
Unverified recruiter requests money or sensitive data	Stop, verify independently, preserve evidence, and report through an appropriate channel.	Legitimate application follow-up should not require unsafe disclosure or payment.

4. Prepare a Professional Follow-Up Message

A follow-up message should be short enough to review quickly and specific enough to identify the application. Use the exact role title and submission date, state the reason for writing, reaffirm interest with one relevant evidence point, and close with a respectful next step. Do not attach materials again unless requested or necessary to correct an identified problem.

Message element	Question to answer
Subject	Can the recipient identify the role and purpose immediately?
Greeting	Is the verified recipient addressed correctly and professionally?
Reference	What position did I apply for, and when did I submit it?
Purpose	Am I confirming a requested action, providing an update, or asking one appropriate status question?
Relevant evidence	Which one verified qualification supports continued interest without repeating the resume?
Closing	What respectful response or next step is appropriate, and how can I be reached?
Final check	Are the facts, tone, recipient, privacy, attachments, and contact details correct?

5. Realistic Example

Leila applies for an Operations Assistant position through the employer's official portal. Her confirmation states that applications will be reviewed for two weeks and that selected candidates will be contacted. She records the position, submission date, resume version, confirmation number,

stated timeline, and a review date in her tracker. She does not contact the employer during the two-week period.

After the stated period passes, the portal still shows 'under review,' and the employer has not prohibited inquiries. Leila locates the verified recruiting contact listed on the official career page and sends one concise message. She identifies the role and submission date, mentions her verified experience with schedule tracking and accurate records, asks whether additional information is needed, and thanks the recruiter for the review. She records the message and does not send another unless the employer responds or the process materially changes.

Sample Application Follow-Up Message

Subject: Operations Assistant Application Follow-Up

Dear Ms. Rivera:

I submitted my application for the Operations Assistant position on September 13, 2026, through your career portal. I remain interested in the opportunity to contribute my verified experience with schedule tracking, spreadsheet records, and concise status communication. The confirmation indicated a two-week review period, so I am writing to ask whether any additional information would be helpful at this stage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leila LouMeena

leila.loumeena@example.com | 555-010-2046

6. Respond to Different Application Results

Result	Professional response	Record and next action
Acknowledgment	Confirm only if a reply or action is requested.	Save the confirmation, timeline, and review date.
Information request	Respond promptly and accurately; send only what is authorized and necessary.	Preserve the request, response, files, and deadline.
Interview invitation	Acknowledge, confirm arrangements, and begin Part IV preparation.	Record format, participants, time zone, accommodations, and required materials.
Delay or hold	Thank the contact, confirm continued interest if genuine, and respect the revised timeline.	Update the review date while continuing other applications.
Rejection	Respond briefly only when appropriate; thank the employer and request feedback only if the relationship permits.	Classify the stage reached, preserve useful feedback, and continue the plan.
No response	Follow instructions; make one appropriate inquiry if justified, then close or pause the record.	Do not assume the reason; continue investing in other verified opportunities.
Suspicious request	Do not pay, disclose sensitive information, or use unverified links.	Verify independently, preserve evidence, and report when appropriate.

7. Evaluate Results Without Guessing

Application results are influenced by fit, timing, competition, employer priorities, internal candidates, funding, hiring changes, and factors the applicant may never observe. Evaluation should therefore focus on patterns the learner can document and actions the learner can control. One rejection does not prove that a resume is weak, and one interview does not prove that every part of the process is effective.

Measure	Question	Possible evidence-based response
Activity	Did I complete the planned number of suitable, verified applications?	Adjust time, sources, or weekly actions when activity is below the plan.
Quality	Did each application meet instructions and present verified evidence for the priority requirements?	Correct recurring instruction, relevance, clarity, or consistency problems.
Response	At which stage did employer interest appear or stop?	Compare acknowledgment, screening, interview, and decision patterns across several applications.
Target fit	Are stronger responses associated with particular roles, settings, or requirements?	Refine the target or emphasize the evidence connected with better-fit opportunities.
Evidence gap	Which required capability repeatedly lacks support?	Develop genuine evidence, seek suitable entry routes, or stop claiming the unsupported requirement.
Process	Were follow-up, records, privacy, and deadlines handled professionally?	Improve the tracker and communication routine rather than increasing contact frequency.

8. Use an Application Results Dashboard

A simple dashboard helps the learner evaluate a group of applications over a meaningful period. Counts should support judgment, not turn the search into a contest for volume. Review both quantity and quality, separate employer stages, and add notes explaining unusual circumstances. Protect employer contacts, confirmation numbers, and personal information.

Period	Suitable applications	Acknowledgments	Screenings	Interviews	Decision s	Learning and next action
Week 1						
Week 2						
Week 3						
Week 4						

9. Digital Tools and Responsible AI Use

A spreadsheet, calendar, task board, or secure career-management system may help record submissions, employer timelines, follow-up dates, responses, and next actions. Use reminders as prompts for human review, not as authorization to contact an employer automatically. Store only necessary information, protect the account, avoid saving passwords in the tracker, and retain a reliable offline copy or export.

AI may help categorize anonymized results, identify patterns, compare a draft follow-up message with employer instructions, or suggest questions for reflection. It must not send messages without review, invent employer responses, infer reasons for rejection, impersonate the applicant, create false urgency, or make automated decisions about sensitive personal information. The learner remains responsible for every communication and interpretation.

Sample Prompt

Using only the anonymized application records I provide, organize the results by stage: submitted, acknowledged, screened, interviewed, offered, rejected, withdrawn, or no response. Identify observable patterns and questions for my review. Do not infer an employer's motives, invent missing facts, judge protected personal characteristics, or recommend repeated contact. Separate documented facts from possible explanations.

10. Step-by-Step Demonstration

1. Save the submission evidence. Preserve the exact materials, date, confirmation, employer instructions, and authorized contact channel.
2. Record the employer timeline. Note when review is expected and when the application should be checked again.
3. Monitor the designated source. Review the authorized portal, email account, telephone messages, and spam folder without exposing credentials.
4. Decide whether contact is appropriate. Apply the employer's directions, timeline, relationship, and communication norms.
5. Verify the recipient and channel. Use an official source or a previously confirmed professional contact.
6. Draft the message. Identify the role, submission date, purpose, one relevant evidence point, and respectful next action.
7. Review before sending. Check accuracy, tone, privacy, attachments, contact information, accessibility, and consistency with the submitted package.
8. Send once and record it. Preserve the message, date, channel, response, and next review point.
9. Classify the result. Record the documented stage without inventing an explanation for the employer's decision.
10. Evaluate a meaningful group of applications. Compare activity, quality, fit, response stages, evidence gaps, and process patterns.
11. Choose the next action. Continue, revise a specific element, strengthen evidence, investigate a new target, prepare for an interview, or close the record.
12. Update the career portfolio and 90-day plan. Preserve learning, approved feedback, revised materials, and the reason for each change.

11. Guided Practice Activity

Practice Activity A: Complete an Application Follow-Up Record

Application and date	Employer instruction or timeline	Follow-up decision and reason	Result and next action

Practice Activity B: Write One Appropriate Message

Using an actual verified application or a clearly labeled practice case, draft one follow-up message. Identify the employer instruction, timeline, verified recipient, purpose, relevant evidence, and desired next action. Ask a reviewer to mark any wording that is vague, repeated, demanding, inaccurate, or inconsistent with the submitted application.

Practice Activity C: Evaluate Four Weeks of Results

- count suitable applications, acknowledgments, screenings, interviews, decisions, and unresolved applications;
- review whether each submission followed instructions and presented relevant verified evidence;
- identify one documented strength, one recurring gap or uncertainty, and one question requiring more evidence;
- separate facts from possible explanations and avoid attributing motives to employers;
- select one justified adjustment to the target, activity level, materials, evidence-development plan, or tracking process; and
- record the adjustment, reason, review date, and measure that will show whether it helped.

12. Check on Learning

1. What should determine the timing of follow-up?

- A. The applicant's anxiety.
- B. Employer instructions, the stated timeline, the communication context, and reasonable professional practice.
- C. An automatic daily reminder.
- D. The number of social-media contacts available.

2. What is the best action when an employer says not to contact the organization?

- A. Contact a different employee.
- B. Respect the instruction and monitor the designated channel.
- C. Send a shorter message every week.
- D. Ask a referral to pressure the recruiter.

3. What belongs in a concise follow-up message?

- A. Position, submission date, clear purpose, one relevant evidence point, and a respectful next step.

- B. The complete resume repeated in the message.
- C. A demand for an immediate decision.
- D. An unverified competing offer.

4. How should a learner interpret one rejection?

- A. As proof that the career goal is impossible.
- B. As one result that should be recorded and considered with a larger pattern.
- C. As permission to invent stronger qualifications.
- D. As evidence of the employer's motive.

5. What should the learner do with a request for money or sensitive information from an unverified recruiter?

- A. Respond quickly to preserve the opportunity.
- B. Stop, verify independently, preserve evidence, and report when appropriate.
- C. Send only half the information.
- D. Ask AI whether the link looks friendly.

6. What is an appropriate use of an application dashboard?

- A. Measuring both activity and quality across documented stages.
- B. Sending automated messages to every employer.
- C. Ranking personal worth by the number of interviews.
- D. Guessing why employers made decisions.

7. Which AI use is responsible?

- A. Inferring why an employer rejected the learner.
- B. Organizing anonymized documented results and separating patterns from questions.
- C. Impersonating the learner in recruiter messages.
- D. Creating a false offer deadline.

8. What should follow an evidence-based evaluation?

- A. A specific next action, reason, review date, and measure of improvement.
- B. A complete career change after one result.
- C. More frequent employer contact.
- D. Deletion of all rejected applications.

Answer Feedback

- 1 B. Follow-up timing should be grounded in the employer's process and the professional context.
- 2 B. Bypassing a clear instruction weakens trust and may interfere with the employer's process.
- 3 A. These elements identify the application and make the request easy to understand and answer.
- 4 B. One result is insufficient evidence for a broad conclusion; patterns require several documented observations.
- 5 B. Independent verification and limited disclosure protect the learner from fraud and identity theft.
- 6 A. A dashboard supports balanced evaluation when counts are interpreted with quality and context.
- 7 B. AI may organize protected, verified information but cannot know an employer's motives or communicate without accountability.

- 8 A. Evaluation becomes useful when it produces a defined, testable adjustment rather than a reaction.

13. Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I preserved the exact submitted materials, date, confirmation, and employer instructions.
- ☐ I recorded the stated timeline, authorized channel, verified contact, and next review date.
- ☐ I respected instructions that limit or prohibit applicant contact.
- ☐ My follow-up decision reflects the timeline, context, relationship, and professional norms.
- ☐ The message identifies the correct role, submission date, purpose, and next action.
- ☐ Every qualification or update in the message is verified and consistent with the application.
- ☐ The tone is concise, respectful, interested, and free of pressure or false urgency.
- ☐ I verified the recipient, address, privacy, attachments, links, and contact information.
- ☐ I sent no repeated or automated contact without a new authorized purpose.
- ☐ I responded promptly and accurately to legitimate employer requests.
- ☐ I stopped and independently verified suspicious requests before disclosing information.
- ☐ I classified each result by documented stage without guessing the employer's motive.
- ☐ I evaluated activity, quality, fit, response patterns, evidence gaps, and process over a meaningful period.
- ☐ I selected a specific improvement supported by the available evidence.
- ☐ AI-supported review used anonymized records and did not infer motives or send communications.
- ☐ I updated the application tracker, career portfolio, and 90-day plan with the next action and review date.

14. Career Portfolio Product

Add an Application Follow-Up and Results Record containing:

- the exact application, confirmation, employer instructions, timeline, and verified contact channel;
- the follow-up decision and written reason for contacting, waiting, closing, or escalating a safety concern;
- the reviewed message and record of any employer response;
- the application results dashboard for a meaningful review period;
- a fact-versus-interpretation analysis of the observed results;
- reviewer feedback on one message and one evaluation decision;
- the specific plan adjustment, supporting evidence, review date, and measure of improvement; and
- the updated career portfolio and 90-day action plan.

Research Sources for This Unit

CareerOneStop. Job-search, application, interview, and career-management resources sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Federal Trade Commission. Guidance for recognizing, avoiding, and reporting job scams. <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/job-scams>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Career Readiness Defined, including communication, professionalism, technology, and career and self-development.

<https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined>

USAJOBS. Application-status and federal hiring-process guidance.

<https://help.usajobs.gov/how-to/application/status>

For locations outside the United States, consult applicable employer procedures, privacy requirements, consumer-protection resources, and professional norms.

Part III Completion Review

Confirm that your resume, application record, messages, portfolio, adapted materials, and follow-up system present the same truthful professional identity and support the requirements of your selected position.

Transition to Part IV

Part III has prepared the learner to present verified qualifications, submit accurate materials, follow the employer's process, and learn from application results. When an employer extends an interview invitation, Part IV, Interview with Confidence, guides the learner through preparation, performance, post-interview communication, and recorded practice with feedback.

Part IV: Interview with Confidence



A résumé may help a job seeker secure an interview, but the interview often determines who receives the job offer. It gives the employer an opportunity to evaluate the candidate's qualifications, communication skills, professional behavior, interest, and potential fit with the organization. At the same time, it allows the candidate to evaluate the position and determine whether the organization supports his or her career goals.

A successful interview rarely happens by chance. It requires research, preparation, practice, thoughtful communication, and the ability to connect one's qualifications to the employer's needs. The following two experiences—from the beginning and later years of my career—demonstrate the difference preparation can make.

A. A Difficult First Interview—and a Lasting Lesson

In 1988, while I was completing the final stage of my doctoral program, a senior representative from a major technology company visited my university to recruit graduate students for several available positions. I was interviewed for a possible training specialist position.

The experience was uncomfortable—not only because it was my first professional interview, but also because I had not prepared adequately. I had not researched the company or learned enough about the position. Therefore, I was not prepared to explain clearly how my education and skills matched the employer's needs, nor had I developed thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer.

I also entered the interview without the enthusiasm and commitment needed to remain fully engaged. At the time, I was uncertain whether I would stay in the United States after graduation and accept a position if one were offered. That uncertainty affected how I presented myself.

During the interview, I struggled to understand the purpose behind some deliberately challenging questions. I was also unfamiliar with the interviewer's use of silence and did not know how to respond confidently during those uncomfortable pauses.

Not surprisingly, I was not selected for the position. Nevertheless, the experience became one of the most valuable lessons of my career. It taught me that successful interviewing requires more than qualifications. It requires research, preparation, enthusiasm, thoughtful communication, and the ability to remain composed when the interview becomes challenging.

Lessons from the Experience

This first interview demonstrates several important principles:

- Research the organization and the position before the interview.
- Determine how your qualifications address the employer's needs.
- Prepare thoughtful questions for the interviewer.
- Enter the interview with genuine interest, energy, and purpose.
- Listen carefully and consider what each question is intended to reveal.
- Do not allow moments of silence to create panic or force a rushed response.
- Treat an unsuccessful interview as a learning experience, not a permanent failure.

B. A Strategic Interview—and a Career-Defining Result

In 2002, after teaching for more than a year as an adjunct professor of instructional technology, I was invited to interview for a full-time assistant professor position at a public university.

A university faculty interview is an extensive process that may last an entire day or longer. My interview included meetings with the college dean, graduate dean, senior academic administrators, and faculty and professionals from related programs. The process also required me to deliver a formal presentation before faculty members, administrators, and other invited professionals. A brief meeting with the university's chief executive was scheduled near the end of the day.

I had one week to prepare. I began by remembering the hard lesson from my first professional interview and reviewing what I had learned from subsequent interviews. I researched the university, the position, its leadership, and its future direction. I prepared for every interviewer as though that person would make the final hiring decision. I also prepared carefully for my formal presentation.

The meeting with the university's chief executive was scheduled as a brief, ten-minute exchange of greetings and formalities. Nevertheless, I viewed it as an opportunity to demonstrate my knowledge of the institution and communicate my vision for the position.

Near the end of the meeting, he asked the customary question: **“Do you have any questions for me?”**

I was ready.

I explained that 20 years earlier, in 1982, I had visited that same campus while searching for a doctoral program after completing my master's degree at a nearby university. At that time, the university did not offer doctoral programs, and the campus consisted primarily of several scattered academic buildings, a student center, and a bookstore. By 2002, it had developed into a sophisticated, modern university.

After acknowledging the changes achieved during his leadership, I asked: **“If you continue leading this university for another five to ten years, what would you like to accomplish next?”**

The question gave him an opportunity to speak proudly about the university's next five-year strategic plan. He then turned the question back to me: **“If we hire you, what will you accomplish during the next five to ten years?”**

That was the question I had hoped—and prepared—to answer.

I explained that I would teach what I practiced as an instructional designer, contribute to establishing a multidisciplinary doctoral program, and apply my expertise in online learning so that every course I taught in the classroom could also be delivered online.

The scheduled ten-minute meeting lasted approximately 40 minutes. A faculty hiring decision that could normally take several weeks was made within four hours.

More importantly, I later delivered on the vision I had presented. Two major goals I discussed during the interview eventually became part of the university's strategic direction: expanding courses for online delivery and establishing a doctoral program in global leadership. **I developed the 5D Model for Planning and Teaching Online Courses and later served as instructional faculty and a dissertation committee member in the doctoral global leadership program.**

The interview did more than help me secure a position. It created an opportunity to express a professional vision that helped shape the remainder of my academic career.

Lessons from the Experience

- Learn from earlier interviews and intentionally apply those lessons.
- Research the organization, its leadership, history, priorities, and future direction.
- Prepare for every interviewer as though that person has an important voice in the decision.
- Develop a clear vision of what you can contribute after being hired.
- Prepare thoughtful questions that demonstrate genuine knowledge and interest.
- Use questions to create a meaningful professional conversation—not merely to obtain basic information.
- Anticipate follow-up questions and prepare specific, credible responses.
- Support interview promises with the ability and commitment to deliver them.
- Recognize that even a brief or ceremonial meeting can become a decisive opportunity.

What the Two Experiences Teach Us

The first experience illustrates what may happen when a qualified candidate enters an interview without sufficient research, preparation, enthusiasm, or understanding of the interviewing process.

The second demonstrates how lessons learned, combined with strategic preparation and a clear professional vision, can turn an interview into a career-defining opportunity.

The contrast leads to a central principle of this part:

- **Do not enter an interview merely hoping to answer questions. Enter prepared to demonstrate how you can help the employer succeed.**

Unit 1. Before the Interview

Unit Purpose

This unit introduces the purpose and nature of the job interview and guides the job seeker through the essential steps of interview preparation. It emphasizes that preparation begins before the candidate enters the interview room or joins an online meeting.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of a job interview from the perspectives of both the employer and the candidate.
- Identify common interview formats.
- Analyze a position and determine what the employer is seeking.
- Research an organization and connect the findings to the interview.
- Match personal qualifications with the position requirements.
- Prepare relevant examples, questions, documents, and interview arrangements.
- Develop a personal interview preparation plan.

1. Understanding the Purpose of the Interview

An interview is a structured professional conversation. It is not simply a test in which the employer asks questions and the candidate attempts to provide acceptable answers. Both parties are gathering information and making decisions.

The Employer's Perspective

The employer generally wants to determine:

- Can the candidate perform the job?
- Does the candidate possess the necessary knowledge and skills?
- Can the candidate communicate clearly and professionally?
- Does the candidate demonstrate genuine interest in the position?
- Will the candidate work effectively with supervisors, colleagues, customers, or clients?
- Does the candidate appear dependable, adaptable, and willing to learn?
- Will the candidate contribute positively to the organization?

The Candidate's Perspective

The candidate should use the interview to determine:

- Does the position support my career goals?
- Do I understand the responsibilities and expectations?
- Does the organization provide an appropriate professional environment?
- Can I make a meaningful contribution?
- Are the working conditions, opportunities, and organizational values compatible with my needs?

The employer is assessing the candidate, but the candidate is also assessing the opportunity.

2. Recognizing Interview Formats

Interviews may be conducted in several formats:

- **Telephone screening:** A brief preliminary interview used to determine whether the candidate should advance.
- **Virtual interview:** An interview conducted through an online meeting platform.
- **One-to-one interview:** A conversation between the candidate and one interviewer.
- **Panel interview:** An interview conducted by several representatives at the same time.
- **Sequential interview:** A series of separate interviews with different individuals.
- **Group interview:** Several candidates are interviewed or observed together.
- **Behavioral interview:** The candidate is asked to provide examples of how he or she handled previous situations.
- **Technical or performance interview:** The candidate demonstrates job-related knowledge or completes a task.
- **Presentation interview:** The candidate prepares and delivers a presentation to an audience.

A hiring process may combine several formats. The candidate should ask in advance about the interview's format, approximate length, participants, location or online platform, and any required presentation or work sample.

3. Analyze the Position

Begin by studying the job announcement and position description carefully. Identify:

- required education and training;
- technical and transferable skills;
- preferred experience;
- major duties and responsibilities;
- required certifications or licenses;
- frequently repeated words or qualifications; and
- organizational priorities suggested by the announcement.

Repeated requirements often indicate what the employer considers most important. The candidate should be prepared to explain how his or her qualifications address those priorities.

4. Research the Organization

Research helps the candidate understand the employer and prepare informed responses and questions.

Gather information about:

- the organization's mission and history;
- major programs, products, or services;
- customers or populations served;
- leadership and organizational structure;
- current priorities and initiatives;
- workplace culture and stated values;
- recent accomplishments or changes; and
- challenges or opportunities related to the position.

Use reliable sources such as the organization’s official website, annual reports, professional publications, and verified public announcements.

Research should help the candidate answer three important questions:

1. Why do I want to work for this organization?
2. How do my qualifications match its needs?
3. What contribution can I make if selected?

5. Match Your Qualifications to the Employer’s Needs

Employers are not interested only in what candidates have done. They want to know how the candidates’ experience can help the organization.

Prepare a qualification-matching table before the interview:

Employer’s Requirement	My Related Qualification	Evidence or Example
Strong communication skills	Graduate presentations and customer service experience	Presented a major project and responded successfully to audience questions
Ability to work with a team	Member of a student project team	Coordinated responsibilities and helped complete the project ahead of schedule
Digital skills	Experience with office and online collaboration tools	Created reports, spreadsheets, presentations, and shared project files

This activity converts general qualifications into relevant evidence.

6. Prepare Examples That Demonstrate Your Abilities

Avoid relying entirely on general claims such as:

- “I am a hard worker.”
- “I communicate well.”
- “I am a good team member.”

Instead, prepare brief examples that demonstrate those qualities. Each example should explain:

1. the situation or responsibility;
2. the action you took; and
3. the result or lesson learned.

For example:

“During a team project, two members disagreed about how to divide the work. I organized a short meeting, helped clarify the responsibilities, and developed a shared schedule. We completed the project on time and received a strong evaluation.”

Specific evidence is more convincing than unsupported claims.

7. Prepare Questions for the Interviewer

Candidates are commonly asked, “**Do you have any questions for us?**”

The answer should almost always be yes.

Prepare questions that demonstrate research, judgment, and genuine interest, such as:

- What would you consider the most important priorities for the person entering this position?
- How will successful performance be evaluated?
- What challenges should the selected candidate be prepared to address?
- How does this position contribute to the organization’s larger goals?
- What opportunities are available for professional growth?
- What are the next steps in the selection process?

Avoid asking questions that can be answered easily by reading the job announcement or the organization’s website. Questions about compensation and benefits are usually more appropriate after the employer introduces those subjects or when an offer is being considered.

8. Arrange the Interview Details

Before the interview, confirm:

- the date and time;
- the location or online meeting link;
- the interviewer’s name and title;
- the interview format and expected duration;
- parking, transportation, or building access;
- required documents, presentations, or work samples; and
- the appropriate professional attire.

For an online interview, test the camera, microphone, internet connection, lighting, background, and meeting platform. Join several minutes early and eliminate possible interruptions.

For an in-person interview, plan the route beforehand and arrive approximately 10 to 15 minutes early.

9. Practice Without Memorizing

Practice helps the candidate organize ideas, reduce anxiety, and communicate more confidently. However, answers should not sound memorized.

Practice:

- introducing yourself;
- explaining your interest in the position;
- connecting your qualifications to the employer’s needs;
- describing accomplishments and challenges;
- responding to behavioral questions;
- asking prepared questions; and
- closing the interview professionally.

A mock interview with a career coach, instructor, colleague, family member, or trusted friend can provide valuable feedback. Recording a practice interview can also reveal problems involving speaking pace, clarity, posture, facial expression, and excessive filler words.

Check Your Understanding

- 1. **Why should an interview be viewed as a two-way professional conversation?**
- 2. **What information should a candidate obtain about the interview format?**
- 3. **Why should the candidate identify repeated requirements in a job announcement?**
- 4. **What three questions should organizational research help the candidate answer?**
- 5. **Why are specific examples more effective than general claims?**
- 6. **What makes a question for the interviewer thoughtful and relevant?**
- 7. **What technology should be tested before a virtual interview?**
- 8. **Why should candidates practice their responses without memorizing them?**

Practice Activity: Develop Your Interview Preparation Plan

Select an actual position for which you might apply. Complete the following preparation plan.

Preparation Area	Your Findings and Actions
Position title and organization	
Three major position requirements	
My qualifications related to each requirement	
Evidence or example supporting each qualification	
Important facts about the organization	
Why I am interested in the position	
Contributions I could make if selected	
Questions I will ask the interviewer	
Interview format and logistical arrangements	
Areas I need to practice or improve	

Interview Preparation Checklist

Before the interview, confirm that you can answer **yes** to each question:

- Have I carefully analyzed the position description?
- Have I identified the employer’s most important requirements?
- Have I researched the organization and its priorities?
- Can I explain why I want this particular position?
- Can I connect my qualifications to the employer’s needs?
- Have I prepared specific examples demonstrating my abilities?
- Have I prepared thoughtful questions for the interviewer?

- Have I practiced responding clearly and confidently?
- Have I confirmed the interview's format, time, place, and participants?
- Have I prepared the necessary documents or work samples?
- Have I made appropriate travel or technology arrangements?
- Am I prepared to demonstrate genuine interest and enthusiasm?

Unit Summary

A successful interview begins well before the first question is asked. Candidates must understand the interview's purpose, analyze the position, research the organization, connect their qualifications to the employer's needs, prepare supporting examples, develop thoughtful questions, and attend carefully to logistical details.

Preparation does not guarantee a job offer, but it allows candidates to present themselves with clarity, relevance, confidence, and professional purpose.

Unit 2. During the Interview

Unit Purpose

This unit prepares candidates to answer common, behavioral, situational, difficult, and potentially inappropriate interview questions. It emphasizes understanding what the interviewer is evaluating, answering directly, and supporting important claims with relevant evidence.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- Identify the purpose behind common interview questions.
- Organize responses clearly and concisely.
- Use specific examples to demonstrate qualifications.
- Respond effectively to behavioral and situational questions.
- Address questions about weaknesses, limited experience, employment gaps, and previous difficulties.
- Respond professionally when a question appears inappropriate.
- develop and practice responses to questions related to an actual position.

1. Understand What the Interviewer Is Evaluating

Interview questions are rarely asked merely to obtain facts. Interviewers may be evaluating:

- knowledge and technical competence;
- communication and interpersonal skills;
- judgment and problem-solving;
- reliability and work habits;
- adaptability and willingness to learn;
- teamwork and leadership;
- motivation and interest;
- professional values; and
- compatibility with the position and organization.

Before answering, consider: **What is the interviewer trying to learn about me?**

Understanding the purpose behind the question helps the candidate select the most relevant information.

2. Answer Directly and Support Your Claims

An effective response generally contains three elements:

- A direct answer to the question.
- Relevant evidence or an example.
- A connection to the position when appropriate.

Example Question

“How do you manage competing priorities?”

Weak response:

“I am organized and work well under pressure.”

Improved response:

“I begin by identifying deadlines, importance, and the consequences of delay. During my final semester, I balanced coursework, an internship, and a major team project. I created a weekly schedule, divided larger assignments into smaller tasks, and reviewed my priorities each morning. I completed all three responsibilities on time. I would use the same disciplined approach in this position.”

The improved response answers the question, provides evidence, and connects the experience to future performance.

3. Introduce Yourself Professionally

“Tell me about yourself” is often one of the first questions. It is not an invitation to provide an entire life history. The interviewer generally wants a concise professional introduction.

A strong response may include:

- your present educational or professional status;
- relevant experience or preparation;
- two or three qualifications related to the position; and
- your reason for pursuing the opportunity.

Example

“I recently completed a bachelor’s degree in business administration, where I developed strong skills in project coordination, data analysis, and professional communication. During my internship, I helped organize customer records and prepare weekly performance reports. I am interested in this position because it would allow me to apply those skills while continuing to develop professionally.”

A new graduate may draw evidence from coursework, internships, volunteer service, student leadership, projects, and independent learning.

4. Explain Why You Want the Position

Avoid responses based entirely on salary, convenience, or the need for any available job.

A stronger response connects:

- the candidate’s interests;
- the position’s responsibilities;
- the organization’s work; and
- the contribution the candidate hopes to make.

Example

“I am interested in this position because it combines customer service with digital communication, two areas in which I have developed experience. I was also impressed by the organization’s emphasis on staff development. I believe I could contribute immediately while continuing to expand my skills.”

The answer should be genuine and specific to the opportunity.

5. Explain Why the Employer Should Hire You

This question asks the candidate to summarize his or her value. The response should not be arrogant or overly general.

A useful response includes:

- qualifications that match the position;
- evidence supporting those qualifications; and
- the potential contribution to the organization.

Example

“My qualifications match three important requirements of the position: communication, organization, and digital proficiency. In my internship, I communicated with customers, maintained accurate electronic records, and helped reorganize a reporting process. I would bring those abilities, along with a strong willingness to learn, to this position.”

6. Respond to Behavioral Questions

Behavioral questions ask candidates to describe something they have done in the past. They often begin with:

- “Tell me about a time when...”
- “Describe a situation in which...”
- “Give me an example of...”
- “How have you handled...?”

Use a simple four-part structure:

1. **Situation:** Briefly describe the context.
2. **Task:** Explain what you needed to accomplish.
3. **Action:** Describe the specific action you took.
4. **Result:** Explain the outcome and lesson learned.

This structure is commonly called the **STAR method**.

Example Question

“Tell me about a time you resolved a conflict.”

“During a group assignment, two members disagreed about the project format. I was responsible for coordinating the final submission. I arranged a brief meeting, asked each person to explain the

concern, and helped the group compare both approaches with the assignment requirements. We combined the strongest elements of the two proposals and completed the project on time. The experience taught me that conflict can often be resolved by returning attention to the shared goal.”

The action should focus on what **you** did, even when describing a team accomplishment.

7. Respond to Situational Questions

Situational questions ask what the candidate would do in a possible future situation.

Examples include:

- “What would you do if a customer became angry?”
- “How would you handle two assignments with the same deadline?”
- “What would you do if you discovered an error in a report?”
- “How would you respond if you disagreed with your supervisor?”

A strong response should:

1. identify the main issue;
2. explain the actions you would take;
3. consider relevant policies or responsibilities; and
4. describe the desired result.

Example

“If I discovered an error in a report, I would first verify the error and determine its possible effect. I would correct it if I had the authority to do so and inform the appropriate supervisor promptly. I would then review how the error occurred and take steps to prevent it from happening again.”

Avoid pretending that every situation has a perfect or effortless solution. Employers often evaluate the reasoning behind the answer.

8. Discuss Your Strengths

Select strengths that are relevant to the position and support them with evidence.

Example

“One of my strengths is organization. During my internship, I maintained project records for three team members and created a tracking system that helped us identify approaching deadlines. That experience would be useful in this position because it requires coordinating several assignments.”

A strength without evidence may sound like an unsupported claim.

9. Discuss a Weakness Constructively

The purpose of this question is often to evaluate self-awareness, honesty, and willingness to improve.

Choose an actual but manageable area for development. Then explain:

1. the weakness;
2. what you are doing to address it; and
3. the progress you have made.

Example

“Earlier, I hesitated to speak during large meetings because I wanted to be certain that every comment was perfectly formed. I began preparing two or three discussion points in advance and volunteering to present short project updates. I have become much more comfortable contributing, although I continue practicing.”

Avoid disguised strengths such as “I work too hard” or weaknesses that would make the candidate unable to perform an essential job responsibility.

10. Address Limited Experience

New graduates often believe they have no experience. However, relevant evidence may come from:

- academic projects;
- internships;
- volunteer service;
- student organizations;
- part-time employment;
- family responsibilities;
- community activities;
- independent projects; and
- professional or technical training.

Example

“I have not yet held this exact job title, but my academic projects and internship required several of the same skills. I analyzed information, prepared reports, collaborated with a team, and presented recommendations. I am ready to transfer those skills to a professional setting.”

Never apologize for being a new graduate. Emphasize preparation, transferable skills, accomplishments, and readiness to learn.

11. Explain an Employment Gap or Career Change

Respond honestly and briefly. Do not become defensive or provide unnecessary personal information.

A useful response should:

- acknowledge the period or change;
- explain it appropriately;
- identify any productive activities or learning; and
- redirect attention toward present readiness.

Example

“I took time away from full-time employment to address family responsibilities. During that period, I completed two online courses and maintained my professional skills through volunteer work. The situation has been resolved, and I am ready to return to full-time employment.”

For a career change:

“My earlier work helped me develop communication, organization, and client-service skills. Through additional training, I developed the technical preparation needed for this new direction. I am now ready to combine both areas of experience.”

12. Discuss a Failure or Mistake

Do not claim that you have never failed or made a mistake. Select an experience that demonstrates accountability and learning.

Explain:

1. what happened;
2. your responsibility;
3. how you responded;
4. what you learned; and
5. what you changed afterward.

The first personal interview story provides an excellent example. The interview was unsuccessful, but the experience produced lessons that contributed to later success.

13. Respond to Negative Questions About Previous Employers

Questions may ask why you left a position or describe a disagreement with a supervisor.

Remain professional:

- state the facts briefly;
- avoid blame and personal attacks;
- explain what you learned;
- emphasize what you are seeking now; and
- redirect the discussion toward the new opportunity.

Example

“The organization restructured the department, and my position was eliminated. I valued the experience and strengthened my customer-service and administrative skills. I am now looking for an opportunity where I can apply those skills and assume additional responsibility.”

14. Handle Questions About Salary

If salary information is already included in the announcement, the candidate may acknowledge that range.

If asked about expectations early in the process, an appropriate response might be:

“I am primarily interested in understanding the responsibilities and determining whether I am the right match for the position. Based on my research and the position’s requirements, I would expect compensation within the organization’s established range. I would be glad to discuss the complete package at the appropriate stage.”

Candidates should research reasonable compensation beforehand, but they should not base the entire interview conversation on salary.

15. Respond to Inappropriate or Unlawful Questions

Depending on the location, certain personal questions may be restricted or inappropriate. These may concern age, disability, religion, marital status, family plans, nationality, or other protected personal matters.

The candidate may respond in several ways:

- ask how the question relates to the position;
- address the underlying job-related concern without revealing private information;
- decline politely; or
- answer if comfortable doing so.

Example

Question: “Do you have children?”

Possible response:

“If you are asking whether I can meet the position’s schedule and travel requirements, yes, I can meet those requirements.”

Employment laws differ by country and jurisdiction. Candidates should learn the applicable protections in their location. If a question raises serious concerns, they may document it after the interview and seek qualified guidance.

16. Use AI as a Practice Tool—Not as a Substitute for Judgment

AI tools can help candidates:

- generate possible interview questions from a job description;
- conduct a simulated interview;
- organize examples;
- identify overly long or unclear responses; and
- practice follow-up questions.

However, candidates should verify AI-generated information and avoid memorizing artificial responses. Answers must remain truthful, personal, and consistent with the résumé and application.

Never allow an AI tool to invent qualifications, experiences, accomplishments, or credentials.

Check Your Understanding

1. What three elements should generally appear in an effective interview response?
2. What information should be included in a professional self-introduction?
3. What four components form the STAR method?
4. How do behavioral questions differ from situational questions?
5. How should a candidate support a claimed strength?
6. What should be included when discussing a weakness?
7. What types of experiences can help a new graduate demonstrate qualifications?
8. How should a candidate explain an employment gap?
9. What is the best approach when discussing a previous employer?
10. How can AI support interview preparation without replacing the candidate's judgment?

Feedback on the Correct Answers

1. Provide a direct answer, relevant evidence, and a connection to the position when appropriate.
2. Include present professional or educational status, relevant experience, qualifications, and interest in the opportunity.
3. Situation, Task, Action, and Result.
4. Behavioral questions ask about past actions; situational questions ask how the candidate would respond to a possible future situation.
5. Provide a specific example demonstrating the strength.
6. Identify an actual manageable weakness, improvement actions, and evidence of progress.
7. Academic projects, internships, volunteer work, part-time employment, student leadership, community activities, training, and independent projects.
8. Explain it honestly and briefly, mention productive activity when relevant, and emphasize present readiness.
9. Remain factual and professional, avoid blame, and redirect attention toward lessons and future goals.
10. AI can generate practice questions, simulate interviews, and improve clarity, but answers must remain truthful, personal, and verified.

Practice Activity: Build Your Interview Response Portfolio

Using an actual job announcement, prepare and practice responses to the following:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in this position?
3. Why should we hire you?
4. What is one of your most relevant strengths?
5. What is an area you are working to improve?
6. Tell me about a time you solved a problem.
7. Tell me about a time you worked successfully with others.
8. Describe a mistake or setback and what you learned.
9. How would you handle an urgent assignment with limited instructions?
10. What contribution would you hope to make during your first year?

For each response, confirm that it:

- answers the question directly;
- relates to the position;

- includes truthful evidence;
- avoids unnecessary details;
- communicates a lesson or result; and
- can be delivered naturally rather than recited.

Interview Response Checklist

Before the interview, determine whether you can answer **yes** to each question:

- Can I introduce myself in approximately one to two minutes?
- Can I explain why I want this specific position?
- Can I summarize why my qualifications match the employer's needs?
- Have I prepared several examples demonstrating my skills?
- Can I organize behavioral responses using the STAR method?
- Can I discuss a weakness honestly and constructively?
- Can I address limited experience without apologizing?
- Can I explain an employment gap or career change briefly?
- Can I discuss mistakes and failures while demonstrating growth?
- Can I speak professionally about previous employers?
- Have I considered how to respond to an inappropriate question?
- Are all my responses truthful and consistent with my application materials?

Unit Summary

Effective interview answers are direct, relevant, truthful, and supported by evidence. Candidates should understand what each question is intended to assess and select examples that demonstrate their qualifications.

The purpose is not to memorize perfect answers. It is to prepare meaningful evidence, organize it clearly, and communicate it naturally. A candidate who understands the position and can demonstrate how past learning and experience relate to future performance is more persuasive than one who depends on unsupported claims.

Unit 3. After the Interview

Unit Purpose

This unit prepares candidates to close an interview professionally, ask meaningful questions, express continued interest, clarify the next steps, and evaluate their performance afterward. It also explains how to send an appropriate thank-you message and respond professionally to the employer's decision.

The final minutes of an interview can leave a lasting impression. A strong closing reinforces the candidate's interest, qualifications, and readiness to contribute.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

1. Recognize appropriate signals that an interview is ending.
2. Ask thoughtful questions based on research and the interview discussion.
3. summarize qualifications and express interest in the position.
4. Clarify the next steps in the selection process.
5. Close an in-person or virtual interview professionally.
6. Prepare and send an appropriate thank-you message.
7. Evaluate interview performance and identify improvements.
8. Respond professionally to an offer, rejection, or delayed decision.

1. Recognize the Closing Stage

The interviewer may signal the closing stage by:

- asking whether the candidate has questions;
- explaining the remainder of the selection process;
- discussing the anticipated decision date;
- summarizing the position;
- asking about availability; or
- thanking the candidate for attending.

Candidates should remain attentive and enthusiastic. Do not become overly relaxed, begin gathering belongings too soon, or assume that the important part of the interview has ended.

The closing is an opportunity to:

- ask informed questions;
- clarify important information;
- reinforce qualifications;
- express genuine interest;
- determine the next steps; and
- leave a final professional impression.

2. Ask Thoughtful Questions

The question "Do you have any questions for us?" should be anticipated and prepared for in advance.

Strong questions demonstrate that the candidate has:

- researched the organization;
- listened carefully during the interview;
- considered the position seriously; and
- begun thinking about how to contribute.

Questions About the Position

- What would be the most important priorities during the first three to six months?
- What qualities have helped previous employees succeed in this position?
- What are the greatest challenges facing the person entering this role?
- How will successful performance be evaluated?
- What does a typical workday or workweek involve?

Questions About the Team and Organization

- How does this position collaborate with other departments or teams?
- What major goals is the department currently pursuing?
- How would you describe the team's working environment?
- What opportunities are available for professional learning and development?
- How does this position contribute to the organization's larger mission?

Questions About the Selection Process

- What are the next steps in the selection process?
- Is there additional information or documentation I can provide?
- When do you expect to make a decision?

Candidates should prepare more questions than they expect to ask. Some questions may be answered during the interview.

3. Build on the Interview Conversation

The most effective questions are not always the ones prepared in advance. Candidates should listen for information that deserves further discussion.

For example:

"You mentioned that the department plans to introduce a new customer-management system. What role would the person in this position have in that transition?"

This question demonstrates listening, interest, and an ability to connect the position with an organizational priority.

The successful personal story at the beginning of Part IV provides a powerful example. A carefully researched question about the institution's future direction led to a deeper conversation about what the candidate could contribute. The question was effective because it was informed, relevant, sincere, and connected to a professional vision.

Candidates should not attempt to imitate the exact question. They should apply the principle: **Use research and active listening to ask questions that create meaningful professional discussion.**

4. Avoid Weak or Premature Questions

During an initial interview, avoid focusing primarily on:

- information clearly available on the organization's website;
- how soon you can receive a promotion;
- how little work the position might require;
- vacation, leave, and benefits before the employer introduces them;
- whether rules can be changed for your convenience; or
- questions answered earlier in the interview.

Compensation, benefits, work arrangements, and scheduling are legitimate considerations. However, timing and wording matter. These subjects are often discussed when the employer introduces them, during a later interview, or when an offer is being considered.

5. Reinforce Your Qualifications

Before leaving, briefly connect your qualifications to the position. This should not become another lengthy presentation.

A concise closing statement may include:

1. appreciation for the interview;
2. continued interest in the position;
3. one or two relevant qualifications; and
4. readiness for the next step.

Example

"Thank you for meeting with me today. Our conversation has strengthened my interest in the position. My project-coordination experience and digital communication skills appear to match the priorities you described, and I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the team."

If the interviewer identifies a particular challenge, the candidate may connect the closing statement to it:

"I was especially interested in the need to reorganize the client-record system. My internship experience included a similar project, and I would be excited to contribute to that effort."

6. Address an Unresolved Concern

Occasionally, the candidate may sense that the interviewer remains uncertain about a qualification. The closing provides an opportunity to address the concern briefly.

A candidate might ask:

"Before we conclude, is there any part of my experience or qualifications that you would like me to clarify further?"

This question should be asked with confidence, not defensiveness. If the interviewer identifies a concern:

- listen without interrupting;
- acknowledge the concern;
- provide relevant evidence;
- explain how you would address a limitation; and
- avoid arguing with the interviewer.

Example

“I understand your concern that I have not used that specific software. I have worked with two similar systems and learned both quickly. I would be prepared to complete training before or immediately after beginning the position.”

7. Clarify the Next Steps

Before leaving, determine:

- whether additional interviews are planned;
- whether references or documents are still needed;
- the approximate decision schedule;
- whom to contact with questions; and
- whether the employer prefers email, telephone, or another communication method.

Do not demand a decision or pressure the interviewer. A professional question is sufficient:

“Could you please explain the next steps and the anticipated timeline for the decision?”

8. Close Professionally

At the conclusion:

- thank the interviewer or panel;
- express continued interest when genuine;
- gather your belongings calmly;
- maintain professional behavior until you leave the location;
- thank administrative or reception personnel; and
- avoid discussing the interview loudly in public areas.

In a virtual interview:

- allow the interviewer to conclude the meeting;
- thank all participants;
- confirm that you have left the online meeting; and
- avoid making comments until the connection has completely ended.

Remember that the interview may not be over until you have left the building or disconnected from the platform.

9. Record Important Information

Soon after the interview, record:

- the names and roles of the interviewers;
- major topics discussed;
- important position requirements;
- organizational priorities or challenges;
- questions you were asked;
- answers that were especially effective;
- answers that need improvement;
- information you promised to provide; and
- the expected decision date.

Do this while the conversation remains fresh. The notes will help you prepare a meaningful thank-you message and respond more effectively during a second interview.

10. Send a Thank-You Message

Send a brief thank-you message, generally within 24 hours. The message should:

- thank the interviewer for the time and opportunity;
- mention a meaningful point from the conversation;
- reaffirm interest in the position;
- briefly reinforce a relevant qualification; and
- provide any promised information.

Sample Thank-You Email

Subject: Thank You—Program Coordinator Interview

Dear Ms. Alvarez:

Thank you for meeting with me yesterday to discuss the program coordinator position. I appreciated learning about the department's plans to expand its community partnerships.

Our conversation strengthened my interest in the position. My experience coordinating student projects and maintaining digital records would allow me to contribute to the priorities we discussed.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena
Telephone Number
Email Address

A thank-you message should be concise, accurate, and personalized. Do not send the same generic message to every interviewer when separate messages are appropriate.

11. Evaluate Your Performance

Interview evaluation turns experience into improvement. Do not judge performance only by whether you receive an offer. Hiring decisions may be influenced by factors outside the candidate's control.

Evaluate the areas you can control:

- preparation;
- punctuality;
- appearance;
- communication;
- listening;
- quality of examples;
- handling of difficult questions;
- questions asked;
- enthusiasm;
- professionalism; and
- closing effectiveness.

Ask yourself:

1. Which responses were strongest?
2. Which questions were difficult?
3. Did I provide enough evidence?
4. Did I speak too much or too little?
5. Did I demonstrate knowledge of the organization?
6. Did I communicate genuine interest?
7. What will I do differently next time?

Every interview should strengthen preparation for the next one.

12. Follow Up Appropriately

If the employer provides a decision date, wait until that date has passed before requesting an update. If no timeline is provided, a polite inquiry after a reasonable period may be appropriate.

Sample Status Inquiry

Subject: Follow-Up—Program Coordinator Interview

Dear Ms. Alvarez:

I am writing to follow up regarding the program coordinator position. I remain very interested in the opportunity and would appreciate any update you can provide concerning the selection process.

Please let me know if you need additional information from me. Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena

One professional inquiry is generally sufficient unless the employer responds with a revised timeline. Repeated calls or messages may create a negative impression.

13. Respond to an Offer Professionally

If offered the position:

- express appreciation and interest;
- request the offer in writing;
- review the responsibilities, compensation, benefits, schedule, location, and starting date;
- ask reasonable questions;
- request appropriate time to consider the offer; and
- respond within the agreed period.

Do not immediately accept an offer that you do not fully understand. Likewise, do not delay unnecessarily or use the offer unprofessionally to pressure other employers.

14. Respond to Rejection Constructively

A rejection can be disappointing, but it should not be interpreted as proof that the candidate lacks value. Another applicant may have possessed experience more closely aligned with the employer's immediate needs.

A brief response may preserve a professional relationship:

"Thank you for informing me of your decision. Although I am disappointed, I appreciated the opportunity to meet the team and learn about the organization. Please consider me for future positions that may match my qualifications."

When appropriate, the candidate may politely request feedback. However, employers may be unable or unwilling to provide it.

The first personal interview story demonstrates that an unsuccessful interview can become valuable when the candidate identifies the lessons and applies them in the future.

15. Evaluate the Opportunity

The candidate should evaluate the employer as carefully as the employer evaluates the candidate.

Consider:

- Are the duties consistent with the job announcement?
- Were the interviewers respectful and professional?
- Are the expectations realistic?
- Does the position support my career direction?
- Does the organization's environment appear compatible with my values?
- Are compensation and working conditions acceptable?
- Did the interview reveal any serious concerns?

Warning signs may include:

- unclear or repeatedly changing responsibilities;
- disrespectful treatment;
- pressure to accept immediately;
- requests for money or sensitive financial information;
- promises that are not included in writing; or
- expectations involving dishonest, unsafe, or unlawful conduct.

Securing an offer is important, but accepting an unsuitable or illegitimate opportunity may create greater problems later.

Check Your Understanding

1. What opportunities does the closing stage provide?
2. What makes a candidate's question thoughtful and effective?
3. Why should candidates prepare more questions than they expect to ask?
4. What should a concise closing statement include?
5. How can a candidate address an unresolved concern?
6. What information should be recorded after the interview?
7. What should a thank-you message contain?
8. Why should interview performance not be evaluated only by the hiring decision?
9. When should a candidate inquire about the selection status?
10. What factors should be evaluated before accepting an offer?

Feedback on the Correct Answers

1. The candidate can ask questions, reinforce qualifications, express interest, clarify concerns, and determine the next steps.
2. It reflects research, active listening, genuine interest, and relevance to the position or organization.
3. Some prepared questions may be answered during the interview.
4. Appreciation, continued interest, relevant qualifications, and readiness for the next step.
5. Ask whether clarification is needed, listen to the concern, provide evidence, and explain how any limitation will be addressed.
6. Record the interviewers, topics, priorities, questions, effective and weak responses, promised materials, and expected timeline.
7. Express appreciation, mention a specific discussion point, reaffirm interest, reinforce a qualification, and provide promised information.
8. Hiring decisions may involve factors outside the candidate's control; evaluation should focus on performance and improvement.
9. After the stated decision date passes or, if no date was provided, after a reasonable period.
10. Responsibilities, compensation, conditions, organizational environment, career fit, written terms, and possible warning signs.

Practice Activity: Prepare Your Interview Closing Plan

Using the same position selected in the earlier activities, complete the following plan:

Closing Element	Your Planned Response
Two thoughtful questions for the interviewer	
One question based on organizational research	
My strongest qualification to reinforce	
My statement of continued interest	
My question about the next steps	
A possible concern I may need to clarify	
One interview topic to mention in my thank-you message	
The information I will record afterward	

Practice delivering your closing statement aloud. It should sound natural, confident, and concise.

Interview Closing and Evaluation Checklist

Determine whether you can answer yes to each question:

- Have I prepared several thoughtful questions?
- Can I build a question from information discussed during the interview?
- Can I summarize my strongest qualifications concisely?
- Can I express genuine interest without sounding demanding?
- Can I ask about the next steps professionally?
- Can I address an unresolved concern calmly?
- Do I know how to close an in-person or virtual interview?
- Am I prepared to record important information immediately afterward?
- Can I write a personalized thank-you message?
- Can I evaluate my performance honestly?
- Do I know when and how to request a status update?
- Can I evaluate an offer before accepting it?
- Can I respond to rejection professionally and learn from the experience?

Unit Summary

The closing stage is an essential part of the interview. Candidates should use it to ask meaningful questions, reinforce their qualifications, express interest, address concerns, and clarify the next steps.

Afterward, candidates should send a concise thank-you message, evaluate their performance, and follow up appropriately. Whether the interview results in an offer or a rejection, the experience should contribute to continued professional growth.

Unit 4. Mock Interview Video and Feedback Practice

Unit Purpose

This unit brings the interview process together through a recorded mock interview. The learner will prepare for an authentic position, complete a structured interview, review the recording, receive feedback, revise selected responses, and document evidence of improvement.

Learning Objectives

- Prepare for a mock interview based on an actual position.
- Demonstrate professional verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Respond to common, behavioral, situational, and difficult questions with relevant evidence.
- Record and review an interview while protecting privacy and obtaining permission.
- Apply structured feedback and demonstrate measurable improvement.
- Add an interview-practice record and improvement plan to the career portfolio.

1. Select an Authentic Interview Situation

Choose a position that matches your current career goal. Use the job announcement, employer research, tailored resume, and application materials already developed in Parts II and III. The mock interview should represent a realistic opportunity rather than a collection of unrelated questions.

2. Prepare the Interview Team and Recording

Ask an instructor, career coach, colleague, classmate, or trusted professional to serve as the interviewer. Provide the position description and the evaluation criteria in advance. Obtain permission from everyone who will be recorded. Use a private setting, protect the recording, and do not post or share it publicly without explicit permission.

3. Conduct the First Recorded Interview

Complete a 15- to 25-minute interview that includes an opening, qualification questions, behavioral or situational questions, candidate questions, and a professional closing. The interviewer should allow natural follow-up questions instead of reading every question mechanically.

Suggested Interview Question Set

Interview stage	Suggested question or task
Opening	Tell me about yourself and your interest in this position.
Qualifications	Which of your qualifications best prepares you for this work?
Behavioral	Describe a time you solved a problem, worked with others, or responded to feedback.
Situational	What would you do if priorities changed or you lacked important information?
Development	What skill are you currently strengthening, and how are you doing so?
Candidate questions	Invite the candidate to ask two or three prepared questions.
Closing	Ask the candidate to summarize interest and clarify the next steps.

4. Review the Recording with Evidence

Watch the recording at least twice. During the first review, evaluate the interview as a whole. During the second, pause and record specific evidence: the question asked, the response given, what worked, what needs improvement, and how the response will be revised. Evaluate content and delivery separately so that speaking style does not hide weak evidence or strong evidence is not overlooked because of nervousness.

5. Receive and Apply Feedback

Ask the interviewer or reviewer to identify two demonstrated strengths and no more than three high-priority improvements. Feedback should describe observable performance, connect to the position, and recommend a practical next action. The learner should compare outside feedback with the self-review and decide which changes are supported by evidence.

6. Record a Focused Second Attempt

Re-record the complete interview or the selected responses that require the most improvement. Do not memorize a script. Demonstrate clearer organization, stronger evidence, more direct answers, and improved professional delivery. Compare the first and second attempts using the same criteria.

Check on Learning

- 1. Why should the mock interview be based on an actual position?**
- 2. What permissions are needed before recording or sharing an interview?**
- 3. Why should interview content and delivery be evaluated separately?**
- 4. What makes feedback useful and actionable?**
- 5. Why is a focused second attempt more useful than merely watching the first recording?**
- 6. Why should candidates improve responses without memorizing a script?**
- 7. What evidence should be retained in the career portfolio?**
- 8. How does the mock interview connect the earlier parts of the Guide?**

Answer Feedback

1. An actual position provides authentic requirements against which preparation and responses can be evaluated.
2. Obtain permission from everyone recorded and additional permission before sharing or posting the recording.
3. Separating them helps the learner judge both the quality of the evidence and the effectiveness of its presentation.
4. Useful feedback identifies observable behavior, explains its effect, and recommends a practical improvement.
5. A second attempt requires the learner to apply feedback and provides evidence of improvement.
6. Memorized answers can sound artificial and may prevent the candidate from responding naturally to follow-up questions.
7. Retain the preparation plan, evaluation forms, selected private recording information or link when appropriate, revised responses, and improvement plan.
8. It applies career goals, employer research, resume evidence, application materials, communication, and responsible technology use in one performance task.

Guided Practice Activity

Complete one recorded mock interview and a focused second attempt. Then prepare the following feedback and improvement record.

Performance area	Evidence from first attempt	Feedback received	Revision or practice action	Evidence from second attempt
Preparation and employer knowledge				
Qualification evidence				
Response organization and relevance				
Professional communication and delivery				
Questions and closing				
Technology privacy and recording control				

Mock Interview Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ I analyzed the position and researched the employer.
- ☐ I connected my responses to the employer's requirements.
- ☐ I supported important claims with accurate examples.
- ☐ I answered questions directly and professionally.
- ☐ I demonstrated appropriate speaking pace, tone, posture, and attention.
- ☐ I asked thoughtful questions and closed professionally.
- ☐ I obtained recording permission and protected the file.
- ☐ I reviewed both content and delivery using specific evidence.
- ☐ I applied feedback in a second attempt.
- ☐ I documented strengths, improvements, and next practice actions.

Career Portfolio Product

Add the mock-interview preparation plan, completed evaluation record, revised response notes, and personal improvement plan to the career portfolio. Retain a recording or private link only when permission, privacy, and storage protections are appropriate.

Unit Summary

A mock interview converts preparation into observable performance. Recording, structured self-review, outside feedback, and a second attempt help the learner replace general impressions with evidence and demonstrate improvement before an actual interview.

Part IV Summary

Mastering the job interview requires preparation, professional self-presentation, effective responses, thoughtful questions, and careful follow-up.

The essential lesson is clear:

Interview success begins before the interview, is demonstrated during the conversation, and continues through reflection and professional follow-up.

Candidates cannot control every hiring decision. They can, however, control the quality of their preparation, the honesty of their presentation, the relevance of their evidence, and the professionalism of their conduct.

Part V: Maintain the Job and Continue Growing



Part Purpose

Getting a job is an important achievement, but it is not the end of the career-development process. New employees must learn the organization, meet performance expectations, build professional relationships, adapt to workplace change, and continue developing their knowledge and skills.

This final part will help learners make a successful transition from job seeker to productive employee.

Part Units

Unit 1. Start Strong

- Accepting the offer professionally
- Clarifying employment conditions
- Completing required documents
- Researching the organization and department
- Preparing for the first day
- Establishing realistic expectations
- Developing a first-30-days plan

Unit 2. Communicate and Collaborate Professionally

- Understanding duties and performance expectations
- Learning workplace procedures and culture

- Working effectively with supervisors
- Building relationships with colleagues
- Asking appropriate questions
- Receiving and applying feedback
- Demonstrating reliability and initiative
- Creating a 30-, 60-, and 90-day success plan

Unit 3. Use Digital Tools and AI Responsibly

- Professional communication
- Teamwork and conflict resolution
- Time and priority management
- Workplace ethics and confidentiality
- Diversity and cultural respect
- Responsible use of digital technologies and AI
- Managing mistakes and workplace challenges
- Protecting one's professional reputation

Unit 4. Respond to Feedback and Continue Learning

- Evaluating job performance
- Documenting accomplishments
- Developing new skills
- Building professional relationships
- Seeking mentoring and constructive feedback
- Updating the résumé and career portfolio
- Preparing for advancement or career change
- Maintaining adaptability and lifelong learning

The part can conclude by returning to the Guide's original philosophy:

- **Do not wait for someone to manage your career. Learn how to assess where you are, determine where you want to go, and develop a practical plan for getting there.**

This structure completes the entire employment cycle:

- **Career direction → Strategic job search → Résumé and application → Interview → Employment success and career growth.**

Unit 1. Start Strong

Unit Purpose

This unit guides new employees through the transition from accepting a job offer to beginning employment. It addresses the practical, professional, and personal preparations needed to create a positive start.

The first day should not be treated as the end of the job search. It is the beginning of a new stage in which the employee must demonstrate that the employer made the right hiring decision.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

1. Accept a job offer professionally.
2. Verify the essential conditions of employment.
3. Complete required pre-employment responsibilities.
4. Research the organization, department, and position.
5. Prepare for the practical requirements of the first day.
6. Establish realistic expectations for beginning a new position.
7. Develop a personal first-30-days preparation plan.

1. Review the Offer Carefully

A verbal offer is encouraging, but the candidate should request and review the official written offer before making a final commitment.

The written offer should clarify:

- position title;
- major responsibilities;
- compensation;
- employment status;
- work schedule;
- work location;
- starting date;
- supervisor or department;
- benefits, when applicable;
- probationary or introductory period;
- conditions that must be completed before employment; and
- deadline for accepting the offer.

Read the entire document carefully. Ask questions about information that is missing, unclear, or different from what was discussed during the interview.

Do not assume that an informal statement made during an interview is part of the employment agreement. Important conditions should be confirmed in writing.

2. Accept the Offer Professionally

Respond within the employer's stated time frame. The acceptance should express appreciation and confirm the important details.

Sample Acceptance Email

Subject: Acceptance of Program Assistant Position

Dear Ms. Alvarez:

Thank you for offering me the program assistant position. I am pleased to accept the offer and look forward to joining the organization.

As stated in the written offer, my starting date will be October 12, and I will report to the Community Programs Department at 8:30 a.m. Please let me know if there are forms, documents, or other requirements I should complete before that date.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to contributing to the department.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena
Telephone Number
Email Address

The message should be concise, accurate, and positive. Keep a copy of the written offer and acceptance.

3. Decline Other Offers and End the Job Search Responsibly

After formally accepting an offer, notify other employers when appropriate. Withdraw from active selection processes rather than allowing employers to continue considering your application unnecessarily.

Sample Withdrawal Message

Subject: Withdrawal from Program Coordinator Search

Dear Mr. Chen:

Thank you for considering my application for the program coordinator position. I have accepted another opportunity and would like to withdraw from the selection process.

I appreciate your time and consideration and wish you success in completing the search.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena

Do not criticize an employer or compare offers in the withdrawal message. Preserve the professional relationship because future opportunities may arise.

4. Complete Pre-Employment Requirements

Employers may require candidates to complete certain steps before beginning work, such as:

- identity and employment-authorization documentation;
- background or reference checks;
- tax and payroll forms;
- direct-deposit information;
- benefit enrollment forms;
- medical examinations or safety clearances when job-related;
- confidentiality or acceptable-use agreements;
- professional license verification;
- technology or security registration; and
- orientation materials or required training.

Complete these requirements accurately and on time. Ask the appropriate representative for clarification rather than guessing.

Protect sensitive personal information. Submit financial, identification, or medical documents only through the employer's authorized and secure process.

5. Learn About the Organization and Department

Continue researching the organization after accepting the offer. Pre-employment research helps the new employee understand the working environment and ask better questions.

Review:

- the mission and values;
- major programs, products, or services;
- organizational structure;
- department responsibilities;
- current priorities and projects;
- customers, clients, students, or communities served;
- policies and professional expectations;
- recent announcements; and
- terminology commonly used by the organization.

If the employer provides an employee handbook or orientation materials, review them before the starting date when possible.

6. Clarify First-Day Arrangements

Several days before beginning, confirm:

- arrival time;
- work location or online access instructions;
- supervisor's name and contact information;
- parking, transportation, or building-entry procedures;
- required identification or documents;
- appropriate attire;
- equipment the employer will provide;

- materials you should bring;
- orientation schedule; and
- whom to contact if an unexpected delay occurs.

A brief confirmation message may prevent confusion:

“I am looking forward to beginning on Monday. I am writing to confirm that I should report to the main office at 8:30 a.m. and ask for Ms. Alvarez. Please let me know if I should bring any additional documents.”

7. Prepare for In-Person, Remote, or Hybrid Work

In-Person Work

Before the first day:

- test the travel route;
- estimate traffic and parking time;
- prepare suitable clothing;
- organize required documents;
- plan meals or other practical needs; and
- arrange family or transportation responsibilities.

Remote Work

Confirm:

- required equipment;
- internet and technology requirements;
- login and account-activation procedures;
- communication platforms;
- work hours and availability expectations;
- technical-support contact information; and
- privacy and security requirements.

Select a workspace that supports concentration and professional communication.

Hybrid Work

Clarify:

- which days require on-site attendance;
- whether the schedule is fixed or flexible;
- how meetings are conducted;
- where documents are stored;
- how availability is communicated; and
- whether the organization provides portable equipment.

Remote work is still professional employment. Employees must be punctual, available, appropriately dressed for meetings, and attentive to confidentiality and security.

8. Prepare for the First Day

Bring only what is appropriate and necessary. Depending on the employer, this may include:

- identification and requested documents;
- a notebook and pen;
- contact information;
- required professional licenses;
- emergency contact details;
- banking information submitted through a secure process;
- eyeglasses, medication, or other personal necessities; and
- a prepared list of practical questions.

Avoid carrying excessive materials or assuming that personal equipment may be connected to the employer's network.

Get adequate rest and arrive early enough to begin calmly. The purpose of the first day is not to demonstrate that you already know everything. It is to listen, learn, and establish a professional foundation.

9. Create a Positive First-Day Impression

On the first day:

- arrive or sign in on time;
- greet people respectfully;
- learn and use names;
- listen carefully during orientation;
- take organized notes;
- follow instructions;
- ask relevant questions;
- observe workplace procedures;
- express appreciation for assistance; and
- remain engaged throughout the day.

Your coworkers may form early impressions based on whether you appear:

- dependable;
- respectful;
- prepared;
- interested;
- willing to learn;
- cooperative; and
- appropriately confident.

Do not attempt to impress others by immediately criticizing existing procedures or explaining how a previous organization did everything better.

10. Balance Confidence with Humility

The employer selected you because you demonstrated potential value. Enter the position with confidence, but recognize that every organization has its own systems, expectations, and culture.

Appropriate confidence sounds like:

“I have experience with a similar process, and I would be glad to learn how it is handled here.”

Inappropriate confidence may sound like:

“I already know the best way to do this, so I do not need much training.”

A new employee should contribute ideas after developing sufficient understanding of the organization and the reasons behind its current practices.

11. Establish Realistic Expectations

New employees may expect to understand the job immediately, while supervisors may expect a gradual learning process. Clarify expectations rather than making assumptions.

Ask your supervisor:

- What should I learn first?
- What are my immediate priorities?
- Which duties should I be able to perform independently during the first month?
- How will my initial performance be evaluated?
- How frequently should I provide progress updates?
- Who should I ask when I need assistance?
- What mistakes should I be especially careful to avoid?

These questions demonstrate responsibility and help prevent misunderstandings.

12. Learn Before Attempting to Change

New employees often notice procedures they believe could be improved. Some observations may be correct, but immediate recommendations can appear uninformed or disrespectful.

Before proposing a change:

1. Learn the existing process.
2. Understand why it is used.
3. Identify the people affected.
4. Gather appropriate evidence.
5. Discuss the idea with the supervisor.
6. Present the recommendation respectfully.

An organization may have legal, financial, technical, or historical reasons for a procedure that are not immediately visible.

13. Develop a First-30-Days Plan

A first-30-days plan helps the employee move from orientation to productive participation.

Week 1: Learn and Observe

- Complete orientation.
- Understand basic policies and procedures.
- Meet the supervisor and immediate coworkers.
- Confirm responsibilities and priorities.
- Establish access to required systems.
- Begin learning workplace terminology and routines.

Week 2: Practice and Clarify

- Begin performing basic duties.
- Ask focused questions.
- Review instructions and notes.
- Identify areas requiring additional training.
- Confirm how work should be submitted or reported.

Week 3: Build Consistency

- Complete routine assignments with less assistance.
- Monitor accuracy and deadlines.
- Apply feedback.
- Strengthen relationships with coworkers.
- Identify one area in which you can contribute immediately.

Week 4: Review Progress

- Evaluate what you have learned.
- Identify accomplishments and remaining questions.
- Request feedback from the supervisor.
- Confirm priorities for the next 30 to 60 days.
- Adjust personal work habits as needed.

The plan should remain flexible. Different positions have different learning periods and performance expectations.

Check Your Understanding

1. **Why should a candidate request a written offer?**
2. **What information should be verified before accepting the position?**
3. **Why should other active applications be withdrawn after accepting an offer?**
4. **What precautions should be taken when submitting sensitive documents?**
5. **What information should be confirmed before the first day?**
6. **How does preparation for remote work differ from preparation for in-person work?**
7. **What behaviors contribute to a positive first-day impression?**
8. **Why should confidence be balanced with humility?**
9. **What questions can help clarify a supervisor's expectations?**
10. **Why should a new employee understand a procedure before recommending changes?**

Feedback on the Correct Answers

1. A written offer provides an official record of the position and its conditions.

2. Verify the title, duties, compensation, work status, schedule, location, starting date, supervisor, benefits, and required conditions.
3. Withdrawing allows employers to stop considering the application and demonstrates professional courtesy.
4. Use only the employer's authorized, secure submission process and request clarification when necessary.
5. Confirm the arrival time, location, supervisor, entry procedures, attire, documents, equipment, and orientation arrangements.
6. Remote work requires additional preparation involving equipment, internet access, communication platforms, workspace, privacy, and security.
7. Punctuality, respectful communication, listening, note-taking, engagement, cooperation, and willingness to learn.
8. Confidence demonstrates readiness, while humility allows the employee to learn the organization's practices and benefit from guidance.
9. Ask about immediate priorities, learning expectations, evaluation, progress reporting, available assistance, and important errors to avoid.
10. Existing procedures may reflect factors that are not immediately apparent. Understanding them leads to more credible recommendations.

Practice Activity: Prepare Your First-30-Days Plan

Use an actual or anticipated position to complete the following plan:

Preparation Area	Information or Planned Action
Position title and department	
Starting date, time, and location	
Supervisor and contact information	
Required documents and forms	
Professional attire or equipment	
Organization and department information to review	
Responsibilities I expect to learn first	
Questions I will ask my supervisor	
People or departments I may work with	
Skills or systems requiring additional training	
My goals for the first week	
My goals for the first 30 days	

New-Job Preparation Checklist

Before beginning the position, determine whether you can answer **yes** to each question:

- Have I received and reviewed the written offer?
- Have I confirmed the essential employment conditions?
- Have I accepted the offer professionally and on time?
- Have I withdrawn appropriately from other active searches?
- Have I completed the required pre-employment documents?
- Have I protected my sensitive personal information?
- Have I researched the organization and department?
- Have I confirmed the first-day arrangements?
- Have I prepared for in-person, remote, or hybrid work requirements?
- Do I know what documents and materials to bring?
- Am I prepared to listen, learn, and take organized notes?
- Have I developed realistic expectations for the first month?
- Can I balance confidence with a willingness to learn?
- Have I prepared a first-30-days plan?

Unit Summary

Beginning a new job requires more than reporting to work on the assigned date. A successful transition begins with carefully reviewing and accepting the offer, completing pre-employment requirements, researching the organization, confirming practical arrangements, and preparing to learn.

A positive beginning does not require the new employee to know everything. It requires punctuality, preparation, respect, curiosity, sound judgment, and a genuine willingness to contribute.

Succeeding During the First 90 Days

Unit Purpose

This unit guides new employees through the first 90 days of employment. During this period, employees learn their responsibilities, understand workplace expectations, build professional relationships, and begin demonstrating their value.

The first 90 days are not simply a period of observation. They are an opportunity to establish dependable work habits and a foundation for long-term success.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- Clarify job responsibilities and performance expectations.
- Learn workplace policies, procedures, systems, and culture.
- Communicate effectively with supervisors and coworkers.
- Ask appropriate questions and request assistance.
- Receive and apply constructive feedback.
- Demonstrate reliability, initiative, and professional judgment.
- Respond responsibly to mistakes and challenges.
- Develop a 30-, 60-, and 90-day success plan.

1. Understand Your Responsibilities

The job description provides a foundation, but it may not explain every daily responsibility. During the first weeks, clarify:

- immediate duties and priorities;
- expected results;
- deadlines and performance standards;
- reporting relationships;
- decision-making authority;
- required procedures;
- available resources;
- communication expectations; and
- how performance will be evaluated.

Ask your supervisor to help distinguish among:

- urgent responsibilities;
- routine duties;
- long-term assignments; and
- activities requiring approval.

Do not rely entirely on assumptions or informal information from coworkers when the supervisor is responsible for setting expectations.

2. Learn How the Organization Operates

Every workplace has formal policies and informal practices. Formal expectations may appear in policies, manuals, job descriptions, and official procedures. Informal practices are often learned through observation and interaction.

Pay attention to:

- how decisions are made;
- how employees communicate;
- how meetings are conducted;
- how assignments are delegated;
- how progress is reported;
- how conflicts are addressed;
- how customers or clients are treated;
- how information is documented; and
- which issues require supervisory approval.

Learning the workplace culture does not mean accepting inappropriate or unethical behavior. It means understanding how the organization functions so that you can work effectively and exercise sound judgment.

3. Establish an Effective Relationship with Your Supervisor

A productive relationship with the supervisor is based on communication, reliability, respect, and clear expectations.

During the first weeks, determine:

- how the supervisor prefers to communicate;
- how frequently progress updates should be provided;
- which decisions you may make independently;
- when approval is required;
- how urgent problems should be reported;
- how assignments will be evaluated; and
- when to request a meeting rather than sending a message.

Do not wait until a deadline has passed to report a problem. Inform the supervisor early enough for corrective action to be taken.

Example

Instead of saying:

“I could not complete the report because I did not receive the data.”

Say:

“I have completed the first two sections of the report. The final section requires data from the finance office, which has not yet arrived. I contacted the office this morning and expect a response by tomorrow. If the data is delayed further, may I submit the completed sections first?”

The second response communicates responsibility, action, and a possible solution.

4. Build Professional Relationships

Coworkers can help new employees understand procedures, locate resources, and become part of the team. Strong working relationships develop through consistent professional behavior.

To build positive relationships:

- learn and correctly pronounce names;
- listen respectfully;
- acknowledge others' experience;
- offer assistance when appropriate;
- share credit;
- meet commitments;
- communicate clearly;
- respect time and boundaries; and
- avoid gossip.

New employees should be friendly without becoming involved too quickly in workplace disagreements or informal groups. Listen carefully, remain neutral, and develop independent professional judgments.

5. Ask Effective Questions

New employees are expected to ask questions. The quality and timing of those questions matter.

Before asking:

- Review the instructions and available resources.
- Identify exactly what is unclear.
- Determine whether the question is urgent.
- Select the appropriate person and communication method.
- Record the answer for future reference.

A focused question might be:

"I reviewed the reporting procedure and completed the first two sections. Should the client's supporting documents be uploaded separately or combined with the final report?"

This demonstrates that the employee has made an effort before requesting assistance.

Avoid pretending to understand when you do not. A timely question can prevent a costly mistake.

6. Take Organized Notes

The first weeks may include large amounts of unfamiliar information. Do not depend entirely on memory.

Keep organized notes concerning:

- procedures;
- deadlines;
- names and responsibilities;
- system instructions;
- recurring meetings;
- common terms and abbreviations;
- questions to ask;
- feedback received; and
- follow-up actions.

Protect confidential information. Follow organizational policies regarding where notes may be stored and whether information may leave the workplace.

7. Demonstrate Reliability

Reliability is established through repeated behavior, not a single impressive action.

A reliable employee:

- arrives and returns from breaks on time;
- meets deadlines;
- follows instructions;
- communicates delays early;
- produces accurate work;
- keeps commitments;
- protects confidential information;
- attends required meetings; and
- follows through without repeated reminders.

When unable to complete an assignment as planned, report the issue promptly. Explain the current status, the obstacle, the action already taken, and the assistance needed.

8. Demonstrate Initiative with Judgment

Initiative means recognizing appropriate work and taking responsible action. It does not mean ignoring authority or changing procedures without approval.

Appropriate initiative includes:

- completing assigned work without unnecessary reminders;
- identifying the next reasonable task;
- offering assistance after meeting your responsibilities;
- suggesting an improvement after understanding the process;
- seeking additional learning; and
- bringing possible problems to the supervisor's attention.

Before acting, ask:

- Do I have the authority to make this decision?
- Could the action affect customers, finances, safety, or confidentiality?
- Is approval required?
- Do I understand the procedure sufficiently?
- Who else may be affected?

Good initiative combines action with professional judgment.

9. Receive and Apply Feedback

Feedback helps employees understand expectations and improve performance. Do not automatically interpret constructive feedback as personal criticism.

When receiving feedback:

1. Listen without interrupting.
2. Ask for clarification or an example when necessary.
3. Confirm what needs to change.
4. Identify specific corrective actions.
5. Apply the feedback.
6. Follow up to confirm improvement.

Example

"Thank you for explaining that the reports need more detail in the recommendation section. I will revise the current report and use the example you provided as a guide. May I ask you to review the next one to confirm that I am meeting the standard?"

This response demonstrates professionalism and willingness to improve.

10. Request Feedback Proactively

Do not assume that silence always means your performance is satisfactory. At appropriate times, ask for feedback.

Useful questions include:

- Am I meeting your expectations at this stage?
- Which aspects of my work are strongest?
- What should I improve next?
- Are my progress updates providing the information you need?
- What should I be able to perform independently by the end of the next month?

Requesting feedback too frequently may burden the supervisor, but waiting until a formal evaluation may allow correctable problems to continue. Agree on an appropriate schedule.

11. Respond Responsibly to Mistakes

Mistakes may occur while learning a new position. The response to a mistake can be as important as the mistake itself.

When a mistake occurs:

1. Stop or limit any continuing harm.
2. Inform the appropriate person promptly.
3. Accept responsibility.
4. Correct the problem when authorized.
5. Document the issue if required.
6. Determine why it happened.
7. Take steps to prevent repetition.

Avoid hiding the mistake, altering records, blaming others, or waiting for someone else to discover it.

Example

"I entered the incorrect date in the client record. I discovered it during my review and corrected it before the report was submitted. I have added a final date-verification step to my checklist so that it does not happen again."

Honesty and corrective action build greater trust than concealment.

12. Manage the Learning Period

New employees sometimes become discouraged because tasks take longer than expected. Learning requires time, repetition, and feedback.

During the learning period:

- divide complex duties into manageable steps;
- practice procedures correctly;
- use approved examples and job aids;

- request clarification early;
- monitor progress;
- acknowledge improvement; and
- avoid comparing your first weeks with an experienced employee's performance.

The goal is consistent development, not immediate perfection.

13. Document Your Progress

Keep a private professional record of:

- training completed;
- new skills acquired;
- assignments completed;
- positive feedback;
- measurable accomplishments;
- problems resolved;
- procedures improved; and
- goals for continued development.

Do not retain confidential organizational information in a personal record. Record your contribution without copying protected documents or data.

This information will later support performance evaluations, résumé updates, promotion applications, and career planning.

14. Develop a 30-, 60-, and 90-Day Plan

First 30 Days: Learn

Focus on:

- understanding responsibilities;
- completing orientation and training;
- learning policies and systems;
- establishing communication with the supervisor;
- meeting coworkers;
- asking questions; and
- completing initial assignments accurately.

Days 31–60: Apply

Focus on:

- performing routine responsibilities more independently;
- improving speed and accuracy;
- applying feedback;
- strengthening workplace relationships;
- contributing to team assignments; and
- identifying additional learning needs.

Days 61–90: Contribute

Focus on:

- demonstrating consistent performance;
- managing regular assignments independently;
- solving appropriate problems;
- suggesting improvements when supported by evidence;
- reviewing progress with the supervisor; and
- establishing goals for the next six months.

The timeline should be adjusted to the complexity of the position. Some jobs require a much longer learning period.

Check Your Understanding

1. **Why should employees clarify responsibilities beyond the written job description?**
2. **What is the difference between formal policies and informal workplace practices?**
3. **What communication preferences should be clarified with a supervisor?**
4. **Why should new employees avoid becoming involved in workplace disagreements too quickly?**
5. **What should an employee do before ask a question?**
6. **How is reliability demonstrated?**
7. **What is the difference between initiative and acting without authority?**
8. **How should an employee respond to constructive feedback?**
9. **What actions should follow the discovery of a mistake?**
10. **How does the emphasis change across the first 30, 60, and 90 days?**

Feedback on the Correct Answers

1. The job description may not explain daily priorities, standards, authority, procedures, and reporting expectations.
2. Formal policies are officially documented; informal practices are learned through observation and interaction.
3. Clarify preferred communication methods, progress-reporting frequency, decision authority, approval requirements, and procedures for urgent problems.
4. Early involvement can damage relationships and prevent the employee from forming an independent judgment.
5. Review instructions and resources, identify the exact issue, consider urgency, and select the appropriate person and method.
6. Through repeated punctuality, accuracy, communication, confidentiality, follow-through, and fulfillment of commitments.
7. Initiative involves responsible action within one's authority; acting without authority may create risk or violate procedure.
8. Listen, clarify, identify the required change, apply it, and confirm improvement.
9. Limit harm, report promptly, accept responsibility, correct the issue, determine its cause, and prevent repetition.
10. The first 30 days emphasize learning, days 31–60 emphasize application, and days 61–90 emphasize consistent contribution.

Practice Activity: Develop Your 90-Day Success Plan

Complete the following plan for an actual or anticipated position:

Period	Learning and Performance Goals	Actions	Evidence of Progress
First 30 days			
Days 31–60			
Days 61–90			

Then identify:

- three responsibilities you must learn;
- two workplace relationships you should develop;
- two questions to clarify with your supervisor;
- one skill requiring additional training;
- one method for documenting accomplishments; and
- one contribution you hope to make by the end of 90 days.

First-90-Days Checklist

Determine whether you can answer yes to each question:

- Do I understand my duties, priorities, and performance standards?
- Do I know which decisions I may make independently?
- Have I learned how my supervisor prefers to communicate?
- Am I building respectful professional relationships?
- Do I ask focused questions after reviewing available information?
- Am I taking organized and secure notes?
- Do I consistently demonstrate punctuality and reliability?
- Can I show initiative without exceeding my authority?
- Do I receive feedback without becoming defensive?
- Am I applying the feedback I receive?
- Do I report and correct mistakes responsibly?
- Am I documenting my learning and accomplishments appropriately?
- Have I established goals for the first 30, 60, and 90 days?
- Have I scheduled an appropriate progress discussion with my supervisor?

Unit Summary

The first 90 days allow new employees to convert potential into demonstrated performance. Success requires understanding expectations, learning workplace systems and culture, communicating with supervisors, building professional relationships, and responding constructively to feedback.

New employees are not expected to know everything immediately. They are expected to learn responsibly, improve consistently, keep commitments, and demonstrate that they can become trusted contributors.

Unit 2. Communicate and Collaborate Professionally

Unit Purpose

This unit addresses the behaviors and values that help employees become trusted members of an organization. Workplace professionalism includes communication, reliability, ethical judgment, teamwork, respect, responsible technology use, and the ability to manage challenges constructively.

Professionalism is not defined by job title, income, or clothing alone. It is demonstrated through daily decisions and consistent conduct.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- Define workplace professionalism and identify its essential elements.
- Communicate effectively through in-person and digital channels.
- Manage time, priorities, meetings, and deadlines.
- Work respectfully and productively with diverse colleagues.
- Address disagreement and conflict constructively.
- Apply ethical judgment and protect confidential information.
- Use digital technologies and AI responsibly.
- Protect and strengthen a professional reputation.

1. Understand Workplace Professionalism

Professionalism is the consistent demonstration of responsible behavior, sound judgment, competence, and respect.

A professional employee:

- arrives and completes work on time;
- communicates clearly and respectfully;
- follows lawful policies and procedures;
- produces accurate work;
- protects confidential information;
- accepts responsibility;
- treats others fairly;
- maintains appropriate boundaries;
- continues learning; and
- represents the organization appropriately.

Professionalism matters at every employment level. An entry-level employee may demonstrate as much professionalism as a senior executive through reliability, conduct, and judgment.

2. Communicate Professionally

Workplace communication may occur:

- face to face;
- by telephone;

- through email;
- in virtual meetings;
- through internal messaging platforms;
- in reports and presentations; and
- through project-management systems.

Before communicating, determine:

- What is the purpose?
- Who needs the information?
- How urgent is it?
- Which communication method is appropriate?
- Does the message contain confidential information?
- What response or action is needed?

A communication method should match the situation. An urgent safety concern should not be placed in a routine email that may not be read promptly. A complex performance issue may require a conversation rather than a series of brief messages.

3. Write Effective Workplace Messages

Professional messages should be:

- clear;
- concise;
- accurate;
- respectful;
- appropriately formatted; and
- sent only to necessary recipients.

A useful workplace message generally includes:

1. a clear subject or purpose;
2. the essential information;
3. the requested action;
4. the deadline, when applicable; and
5. a professional closing.

Weak Message

Subject: Question

Hi. I need the information. Please send it soon.

Improved Message

Subject: Enrollment Data Needed by Thursday

Dear Mr. Chen:

I am completing the monthly enrollment report and need the final enrollment totals for the evening program. Would you please send the figures by 2:00 p.m. Thursday? This will allow me to submit the report by Friday's deadline.

Thank you,
Leila

Before sending a message, review the recipient list, tone, attachments, dates, names, and requested action.

4. Communicate Respectfully During Disagreement

Professional communication does not require agreement. Employees may question a decision, suggest a different approach, or identify a concern without attacking another person.

Instead of saying:

“That idea will never work.”

Say:

“I am concerned that this approach may delay the project because the required data will not be available until Friday. Could we consider completing the other sections first?”

Focus on:

- the issue rather than the person;
- evidence rather than assumptions;
- solutions rather than blame; and
- the shared goal rather than winning the argument.

5. Manage Time and Priorities

Effective time management begins with understanding what must be accomplished and when.

At the beginning of the workday or week:

1. Review assignments and deadlines.
2. Identify urgent and important responsibilities.
3. Estimate the time required.
4. Divide large projects into smaller tasks.
5. Schedule focused work periods.
6. Allow time for review and unexpected problems.
7. Update the plan when priorities change.

When two assignments appear equally urgent, do not guess which should receive priority. Ask the supervisor:

“Both reports are due tomorrow, and each will require approximately four hours. Which one should I complete first?”

Raising the issue early allows the supervisor to set priorities or adjust resources.

6. Participate Productively in Meetings

Before a meeting:

- review the agenda and materials;
- prepare required information;
- identify questions or contributions; and
- join or arrive on time.

During the meeting:

- listen attentively;
- keep comments relevant;
- avoid interrupting;
- take appropriate notes;
- clarify assigned responsibilities; and
- avoid unrelated telephone or computer use.

After the meeting:

- review decisions;
- confirm assigned actions and deadlines;
- complete follow-up responsibilities; and
- communicate problems promptly.

Attendance alone is not participation. Productive participation requires preparation, attention, and follow-through.

7. Work Effectively as a Team Member

Effective team members:

- understand the shared goal;
- complete their assigned work;
- provide progress updates;
- ask for help before a problem becomes a crisis;
- offer assistance appropriately;
- share information;
- respect different expertise and perspectives;
- give credit to others; and
- support the final team decision.

Teamwork does not mean that every employee performs the same task or agrees with every idea. It means coordinating different responsibilities toward a common result.

8. Address Workplace Conflict Constructively

Conflict may develop from:

- unclear responsibilities;
- different work styles;
- competition for limited resources;

- poor communication;
- unmet expectations;
- cultural misunderstandings; or
- personality differences.

When addressing conflict:

1. Identify the specific issue.
2. Separate facts from assumptions.
3. Speak directly with the appropriate person when safe and reasonable.
4. Listen to the other perspective.
5. Identify shared interests.
6. develop possible solutions.
7. Agree on responsibilities and follow-up.
8. Involve a supervisor or appropriate office when necessary.

Avoid gossiping about the conflict or recruiting coworkers to take sides.

If the situation involves harassment, discrimination, threats, violence, retaliation, or serious policy violations, follow the organization's reporting procedures rather than attempting to resolve it informally alone.

9. Demonstrate Respect Across Differences

Modern workplaces include people with different:

- cultures and nationalities;
- languages and accents;
- ages and generations;
- religions and beliefs;
- abilities and disabilities;
- educational backgrounds;
- identities;
- communication styles; and
- professional experiences.

Respectful employees:

- avoid stereotypes;
- pronounce names correctly or ask respectfully;
- listen to different perspectives;
- use appropriate language;
- respect accessibility needs;
- avoid jokes or comments that may demean others;
- evaluate coworkers by performance rather than assumptions; and
- remain willing to learn.

Professional respect does not require people to abandon their differences. It requires them to work together without discrimination, humiliation, or exclusion.

10. Apply Ethical Judgment

Policies cannot anticipate every workplace situation. Employees must also apply ethical judgment.

Before acting, ask:

- Is this action honest?
- Is it legal and consistent with policy?
- Could it harm another person or the organization?
- Does it create a conflict of interest?
- Would I be comfortable if the action became public?
- Should I seek guidance before proceeding?

Ethical concerns may involve:

- inaccurate records;
- misuse of funds or property;
- favoritism;
- conflicts of interest;
- false claims;
- plagiarism;
- discrimination;
- unsafe practices;
- manipulation of data; or
- concealment of mistakes.

When uncertain, consult an authorized supervisor, human-resources representative, compliance officer, or other appropriate professional.

11. Protect Confidential Information

Employees may encounter confidential information concerning:

- customers or clients;
- students or patients;
- personnel;
- financial records;
- business plans;
- passwords and security;
- research;
- legal matters; and
- organizational decisions.

To protect information:

- access only what your work requires;
- use authorized systems;
- follow password and security rules;
- verify recipients before sending documents;
- avoid discussing sensitive matters in public;
- secure paper and electronic records;
- do not transfer work files to personal accounts without permission; and
- report a suspected loss or breach promptly.

Confidentiality continues outside the workplace and may continue after employment ends.

12. Use Digital Technologies Responsibly

Workplace technology should be used according to organizational policies.

Responsible use includes:

- protecting passwords and authentication methods;
- using approved applications and devices;
- installing software only when authorized;
- avoiding suspicious links and attachments;
- separating personal and professional accounts;
- protecting devices in public locations;
- storing files in approved locations;
- following record-retention requirements; and
- reporting possible security incidents.

Convenience should never override privacy, security, or policy.

13. Use Artificial Intelligence Responsibly

AI tools may assist with drafting, summarizing, organizing, analyzing, and generating ideas. However, their use can create risks involving accuracy, bias, privacy, confidentiality, intellectual property, and accountability.

Before using AI for workplace tasks:

1. Determine whether the organization permits it.
2. Use only approved tools and accounts.
3. Never enter confidential or protected information without authorization.
4. Verify facts, calculations, citations, and recommendations.
5. Examine possible bias or misleading content.
6. Revise the output using professional judgment.
7. Disclose AI assistance when required.
8. Accept responsibility for the final work.

AI-generated content should not be presented as verified merely because it appears confident or polished.

The employee—not the technology—remains accountable for the final product.

14. Maintain Professional Boundaries

Professional relationships can be friendly without becoming inappropriate.

Maintain boundaries concerning:

- confidential conversations;
- personal questions;
- social media;

- physical contact;
- jokes and informal language;
- romantic relationships;
- gifts or favors;
- communication outside working hours; and
- relationships involving authority.

Organizational culture may be informal, but professional judgment remains necessary.

Before posting workplace information or images online, consider organizational policies, confidentiality, coworkers' privacy, and the possible effect on your reputation.

15. Protect Your Professional Reputation

A professional reputation develops through consistent behavior over time. It can also be damaged quickly.

Reputation is influenced by:

- work quality;
- reliability;
- treatment of others;
- honesty;
- response to feedback;
- communication;
- online behavior;
- handling of confidential information; and
- conduct during difficult situations.

Do not participate in gossip, repeated complaining, disrespectful messages, or impulsive online posting. Written and digital communications may be forwarded, stored, or misunderstood.

Ask yourself:

"Does this action reflect the professional I want others to trust?"

16. Manage Stress and Seek Assistance

Professionalism does not mean ignoring stress or pretending to manage every problem alone.

Employees should:

- recognize signs of excessive stress;
- maintain reasonable work routines;
- take authorized breaks and leave;
- communicate workload problems early;
- request clarification or assistance;
- use available employee-support resources; and
- seek qualified help when necessary.

If a situation creates immediate danger or involves serious misconduct, use the organization's emergency or reporting procedures.

Requesting appropriate assistance is a sign of judgment, not weakness.

Check Your Understanding

1. What behaviors demonstrate workplace professionalism?
2. What factors should determine the method used for workplace communication?
3. What information should a professional workplace message include?
4. How can an employee disagree respectfully?
5. What should an employee do when two assignments have competing deadlines?
6. What responsibilities continue after a workplace meeting?
7. How should workplace conflict be addressed?
8. What questions can guide ethical decision-making?
9. What precautions should employees take with confidential information?
10. What responsibilities remain with an employee who uses AI-generated material?

Feedback on the Correct Answers

1. Professionalism includes reliability, respectful communication, competence, ethical judgment, accountability, confidentiality, and continued learning.
2. Consider purpose, audience, urgency, complexity, confidentiality, and the required response.
3. Include a clear purpose, essential information, requested action, deadline when applicable, and professional closing.
4. Focus on the issue, use evidence, propose solutions, and respect the other person.
5. Inform the supervisor early and request guidance concerning priority.
6. Review decisions, confirm assignments, meet deadlines, and communicate problems.
7. Identify the issue, separate facts from assumptions, listen, seek shared interests, agree on solutions, and involve appropriate authority when necessary.
8. Consider honesty, legality, policy, possible harm, conflicts of interest, public accountability, and the need for guidance.
9. Access only necessary information, use authorized systems, verify recipients, secure records, and report suspected breaches.
10. The employee must verify accuracy, protect information, follow policy, disclose use when required, and accept responsibility for the final work.

Practice Activity: Respond to Workplace Situations

For each situation, describe:

1. the main issue;
2. the professional or ethical responsibility involved;
3. the action you would take;
4. the person you may need to consult; and
5. the desired result.

Situation A

You receive two urgent assignments from different supervisors, and both are due at the same time.

Situation B

A coworker sends you a confidential client document through your personal email account for convenience.

Situation C

An AI tool produces a well-written report containing statistics you cannot verify.

Situation D

A coworker repeatedly makes disrespectful comments about another employee's accent.

Situation E

You discover that an error you made has already been included in a report sent to management.

Situation	Main Issue	Planned Action	Person to Consult	Desired Result
A. Competing assignments				
B. Confidential document				
C. Unverified AI content				
D. Disrespectful comments				
E. Reporting error				

Workplace Professionalism Checklist

Determine whether you can answer **yes** to each question:

- Do I communicate clearly and respectfully?
- Do I select communication methods appropriate to the situation?
- Do I review messages before sending them?
- Can I disagree without attacking another person?
- Do I organize priorities and communicate possible delays?
- Do I prepare for meetings and complete follow-up responsibilities?
- Do I fulfill my responsibilities as a team member?
- Can I address conflict without gossip or blame?
- Do I demonstrate respect across personal and cultural differences?
- Can I recognize an issue requiring formal reporting?
- Do I apply ethical judgment when policies are unclear?
- Do I protect confidential information?
- Do I use workplace technology securely and responsibly?
- Do I follow organizational requirements when using AI?
- Do I verify AI-generated information before using it?
- Do I maintain appropriate professional boundaries?
- Does my online behavior support my professional reputation?
- Do I seek assistance when a situation exceeds my responsibility or authority?

Unit Summary

Workplace professionalism is demonstrated through daily conduct. It includes effective communication, time management, teamwork, ethical judgment, respect, confidentiality, and responsible use of technology.

Professional employees do more than complete assigned tasks. They build trust, accept accountability, exercise sound judgment, and contribute to a respectful and productive workplace.

Unit 3. Use Digital Tools and AI Responsibly

Unit Purpose

This unit helps employees use workplace technologies and artificial intelligence to improve performance while protecting accuracy, privacy, security, fairness, and human accountability.

Learning Objectives

- Select digital tools that fit the work purpose and organizational requirements.
- Protect confidential and personal information when using workplace systems.
- Use AI for appropriate support tasks without surrendering professional judgment.
- Verify digital and AI-supported work before using or sharing it.
- Document responsible technology decisions and identify needed training.

1. Begin with the Work Purpose

Technology should support a defined work need. Before selecting a tool, determine the task, audience, required result, sensitivity of the information, organizational policy, and person accountable for the final work. A familiar or popular tool is not automatically the correct tool.

2. Use Authorized Systems and Protect Information

Use employer-approved accounts, devices, storage locations, and communication channels. Limit access to people who need the information, verify recipients and permissions, use secure passwords and required authentication, and report suspected loss or disclosure promptly. Never enter confidential, proprietary, client, student, patient, personnel, or personally identifiable information into an AI service unless the organization has explicitly authorized that use.

3. Assign AI an Appropriate Support Role

Appropriate support	Required human responsibility
Organize nonconfidential notes or brainstorm alternatives	Confirm that the input is permitted and the output fits the actual task.
Draft or revise routine language	Verify facts, tone, context, and organizational requirements.
Summarize authorized material	Compare the summary with the complete source and restore missing qualifications.
Analyze patterns in approved data	Check data quality, method, possible bias, and interpretation.
Prepare practice questions or examples	Ensure that examples are accurate, relevant, and not represented as actual evidence.

AI should not make decisions that require professional authority, ethical judgment, protected information, or accountability that belongs to an employee or authorized decision-maker.

4. Apply the VERIFY Review

Before using AI-supported work, verify the source material, evidence, relevance, instructions, factual accuracy, and your responsibility for the final result. Check calculations, names, dates, citations, policies, and important claims against reliable sources. Revise or reject output that cannot be verified.

5. Communicate Technology Use Honestly

Follow the employer's disclosure and documentation requirements. Do not present AI-generated analysis, writing, code, images, or decisions as entirely your own work when disclosure is required. Never use technology to fabricate experience, evidence, records, references, or performance.

6. Continue Building Digital Readiness

Digital readiness is the ability to learn and apply changing tools, not merely familiarity with one application. Identify the systems essential to your position, request authorized training, practice in safe environments, document demonstrated proficiency, and update your development plan as work requirements change.

Check on Learning

1. What should determine whether a digital tool is appropriate for a workplace task?
2. What information should not be entered into an AI service without explicit authorization?
3. What responsibilities remain with an employee who uses AI-supported work?
4. Why must AI output be compared with reliable sources?
5. When should technology or AI use be disclosed?
6. What does continue digital readiness require?
7. Why is fabricated evidence unacceptable even when produced by a tool?
8. What action should follow a suspected privacy or security problem?

Answer Feedback

1. The work purpose, audience, required result, information sensitivity, policy, and accountability should guide the choice.
2. Do not enter confidential, proprietary, protected, or personally identifiable information unless the employer explicitly authorizes the service and use.
3. The employee must verify accuracy, apply professional judgment, follow policy, protect information, and accept responsibility for the final work.
4. AI can produce inaccurate, incomplete, biased, outdated, or invented information.
5. Disclose use when organizational policy, law, professional standards, a supervisor, or the nature of the work requires it.
6. Continue learning relevant systems, practicing safely, documenting performance, and updating the development plan.
7. Fabrication violates honesty, damages trust, and may cause legal, ethical, or employment consequences.
8. Stop the unsafe activity, preserve necessary information, and report the concern through the organization's authorized procedure.

Guided Practice Activity

Select one realistic workplace task that may involve a digital tool or AI. Complete the following responsible-use plan before performing the task.

Decision area	Your evidence or planned action
Work purpose and required result	
Authorized tool or system	
Information that must be protected	
Appropriate role for AI, if any	
Sources and facts to verify	
Human review and approval required	

Decision area	Your evidence or planned action
Disclosure or documentation requirement	
Skill or training still needed	

Responsible Digital and AI Use Checklist

- ☐ I began with a defined work purpose.
- ☐ I used an authorized system and account.
- ☐ I protected confidential and personal information.
- ☐ I limited AI to an appropriate support role.
- ☐ I verified facts, calculations, sources, and important claims.
- ☐ I reviewed the output for bias, omissions, and misleading language.
- ☐ I followed disclosure, documentation, and approval requirements.
- ☐ I accepted responsibility for the final work.

Career Portfolio Product

Add the completed responsible-use plan, evidence of any authorized training, and a brief statement explaining how you will apply digital tools and AI accurately, securely, and responsibly in your work.

Unit Summary

Responsible technology use combines useful tools with informed human judgment. Employees must follow policy, protect information, verify results, communicate honestly, and remain accountable for every final decision and work product.

Unit 4. Respond to Feedback and Continue Learning

Unit Purpose

This unit helps employees take responsibility for their continued professional growth. Career development does not end when a person secures and learns a job. Employees must evaluate their progress, document accomplishments, develop new skills, build professional relationships, and prepare for changing workplace demands.

A career is not a single job. It is a continuing process of learning, contribution, evaluation, and adjustment.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- Evaluate personal career progress and job performance.
- Establish short- and long-term professional goals.
- Document accomplishments and demonstrated skills.
- Identify and address professional-development needs.
- Build constructive professional relationships.
- Seek mentoring and use feedback effectively.
- Maintain an updated résumé and career portfolio.
- Prepare responsibly for advancement or career change.
- Demonstrate adaptability and commitment to lifelong learning.

1. Take Responsibility for Your Career

Employers may provide training, feedback, and advancement opportunities, but employees remain responsible for the direction of their careers.

Career responsibility includes:

- understanding your strengths and development needs;
- establishing meaningful goals;
- monitoring changes in your occupation;
- developing relevant skills;
- seeking feedback;
- documenting accomplishments;
- building professional relationships; and
- adjusting plans when circumstances change.

Do not wait until a job is threatened or lost before considering your next professional step.

2. Evaluate Where You Are

Career planning begins with an honest assessment of your present situation.

Ask yourself:

- What responsibilities can I now perform successfully?

- What new knowledge and skills have I developed?
- Which parts of my work are most satisfying?
- Which responsibilities are most challenging?
- What feedback have I received?
- What value have I contributed?
- What additional responsibilities am I prepared to assume?
- Does this position continue to support my career direction?

Self-evaluation should be based on evidence rather than feelings alone. Review performance feedback, completed projects, measurable results, and changes in responsibility.

3. Establish Career Goals

Career goals provide direction for learning and decision-making. They should be specific enough to guide action but flexible enough to accommodate new opportunities.

Short-Term Goals

Short-term goals may include:

- learning a new workplace system;
- improving a specific skill;
- completing a certificate;
- assuming responsibility for a project;
- strengthening communication or leadership skills; or
- improving performance in a current duty.

Long-Term Goals

Long-term goals may include:

- earning an advanced credential;
- moving into a leadership role;
- entering a specialized occupation;
- starting a business;
- changing careers; or
- contributing to a major professional or community goal.

A useful goal should identify:

- what you intend to accomplish;
- why it matters;
- what actions are required;
- what resources are needed;
- when progress will be reviewed; and
- what evidence will demonstrate achievement.

4. Develop a Professional-Growth Plan

A professional-growth plan connects career goals with practical action.

Career Goal	Skills or Knowledge Needed	Planned Actions	Target Date	Evidence of Progress
Qualify for a project-lead role	Project planning, budgeting, and team coordination	Complete training and assist with two projects	Six months	Certificate, supervisor feedback, and completed projects
Improve presentation skills	Organization, delivery, and visual design	Join a workshop and deliver monthly team updates	Four months	Recorded presentations and feedback

Review the plan periodically and revise it when responsibilities, interests, or workplace conditions change.

5. Document Your Accomplishments

- Do not depend on memory when preparing for a performance review, promotion, or future job search.

Maintain a professional record of:

- completed projects;
- measurable results;
- problems resolved;
- procedures improved;
- positive feedback;
- training and certifications;
- awards and recognition;
- leadership and teamwork;
- presentations and publications; and
- new responsibilities.

Whenever possible, describe accomplishments in measurable terms.

Instead of writing:

“Helped improve customer service.”

Write:

“Helped redesign the customer-response process, reducing the average response time from three days to one day.”

Protect confidential information. Document your contribution without copying private records, internal documents, protected data, or materials belonging to the employer.

6. Prepare for Performance Evaluations

Before a performance evaluation:

1. Review your responsibilities and earlier goals.
2. Gather evidence of accomplishments.

3. Identify difficulties and corrective actions.
4. Evaluate your professional-development progress.
5. Prepare questions.
6. Identify appropriate future goals.

During the evaluation:

- listen carefully;
- request examples when feedback is unclear;
- discuss accomplishments without exaggeration;
- acknowledge areas requiring improvement;
- take notes;
- confirm future expectations; and
- agree on follow-up actions.

A performance evaluation should support development, not merely assign a rating.

7. Continue Developing Skills

Technology, occupations, and employer expectations continually change. Skills that helped an employee secure a position may not be sufficient throughout an entire career.

Professional development may include:

- employer-provided training;
- online courses;
- certificates and professional credentials;
- academic study;
- workshops and conferences;
- professional reading;
- supervised practice;
- stretch assignments;
- mentoring;
- volunteer leadership; and
- independent projects.

Select learning opportunities based on career needs rather than collecting credentials without a clear purpose.

Before investing time or money, ask:

- Is this skill relevant to my goal?
- Is the provider credible?
- Will I practice or demonstrate the skill?
- Is the credential recognized in my field?
- Can I apply the learning in a realistic setting?
- Is there a more effective or affordable option?

As emphasized throughout *The COACH Guide*:

- ✓ **Chart before you start; test before you invest.**

8. Develop Digital and AI Readiness

Digital readiness requires more than learning one software application. Employees should be prepared to learn new tools, evaluate information, protect data, and adapt their work processes.

AI readiness includes the ability to:

- ✓ understand appropriate uses and limitations;
- ✓ develop clear instructions or prompts;
- ✓ verify AI-generated information;
- ✓ recognize possible bias;
- ✓ protect confidential information;
- ✓ apply human judgment;
- ✓ follow organizational policies; and
- ✓ remain accountable for the final work.

AI may change how tasks are performed, but it does not eliminate the need for subject knowledge, ethical judgment, communication, creativity, and responsibility.

Employees should ask:

“How can I use technology to improve my work while protecting accuracy, privacy, fairness, and human accountability?”

9. Build a Professional Network

A professional network consists of people with whom you develop genuine, mutually respectful relationships.

It may include:

- supervisors and coworkers;
- instructors and classmates;
- mentors;
- professional-association members;
- former colleagues;
- customers and community partners;
- conference participants; and
- professionals in related fields.

Networking is not simply asking people for jobs. It involves:

- exchanging useful information;
- learning from others;
- offering assistance;
- maintaining appropriate contact;
- sharing professional interests; and
- building trust over time.

Contact people periodically rather than communicating only when you need help.

10. Seek Mentoring

A mentor can provide perspective, feedback, encouragement, and professional guidance.

An effective mentor may help you:

- understand a profession or organization;
- evaluate career options;
- recognize strengths and blind spots;
- prepare for advancement;
- expand professional relationships; and
- learn from experience.

A mentor does not make decisions for you or guarantee advancement. The employee remains responsible for evaluating advice and taking action.

Mentoring may occur through one formal relationship or through several people who provide guidance in different areas.

11. Maintain Your Résumé and Career Portfolio

- **Do not wait until you urgently need another job to update your materials.**

Periodically update:

- résumé;
- professional profile;
- skills inventory;
- certificates and licenses;
- work samples;
- accomplishments;
- references;
- awards;
- presentations and publications; and
- professional-development activities.

A career portfolio may contain:

- a current résumé;
- selected work samples;
- project summaries;
- performance recognition;
- certificates;
- presentations;
- publications;
- letters of appreciation; and
- evidence of measurable accomplishments.

Include only materials you have permission to retain and share. Remove confidential information and materials owned exclusively by the employer.

12. Prepare for Advancement

Before pursuing a promotion, determine:

- the qualifications required;
- the responsibilities involved;
- the skills you already possess;
- the gaps you need to address;
- the evidence demonstrating readiness; and
- whether the position supports your career goals.

Demonstrate readiness through performance rather than entitlement. Discuss professional interests with your supervisor at an appropriate time and request guidance concerning development opportunities.

Advancement does not always require becoming a supervisor. It may involve:

- greater technical expertise;
- project leadership;
- expanded responsibilities;
- specialized assignments;
- improved compensation;
- independent consulting; or
- movement into a different professional field.

13. Prepare for Career Change

Career change may result from:

- changing interests;
- family or personal needs;
- technological developments;
- organizational restructuring;
- economic conditions;
- relocation;
- health considerations; or
- a desire for greater purpose or opportunity.

Before changing direction:

1. Assess your reasons.
2. Research the new field.
3. Identify transferable skills.
4. Determine required qualifications.
5. Test the field through coursework, projects, volunteering, or informational conversations.
6. develop a transition plan.
7. Consider financial and personal consequences.
8. Establish an alternative plan.

- **Do not abandon a stable position impulsively without understanding the new direction and its requirements.**

14. Remain Adaptable and Resilient

Careers rarely develop exactly as planned. Employees may experience rejection, workplace change, unsuccessful projects, job loss, or unexpected opportunities.

Adaptability involves:

- learning new skills;
- adjusting methods;
- accepting constructive feedback;
- responding to changing priorities;
- considering alternative paths; and
- revising goals when necessary.

Resilience involves:

- acknowledging disappointment;
- learning from experience;
- seeking appropriate support;
- maintaining perspective;
- identifying what can be controlled; and
- taking the next practical action.

The first interview story in Part IV illustrates this principle. An unsuccessful experience became preparation for later success because the lessons were recognized and applied.

15. Leave a Position Professionally

Employees may eventually leave for advancement, career change, relocation, retirement, or other reasons.

When leaving:

- review contractual or policy requirements;
- provide appropriate notice;
- submit a professional resignation;
- complete responsibilities when possible;
- organize an orderly transition;
- return organizational property;
- protect confidential information;
- avoid damaging professional relationships; and
- express appreciation where appropriate.

A professional departure protects your reputation and may preserve valuable relationships and references.

Sample Resignation Message

Subject: Resignation—Program Coordinator

Dear Ms. Alvarez:

Please accept this message as formal notice of my resignation from the program coordinator position, effective October 30.

I appreciate the professional opportunities and support I have received during my time with the organization. I will do everything reasonably possible during the notice period to complete current responsibilities and support an orderly transition.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the department.

Sincerely,
Leila LouMeena

Check Your Understanding

1. **Why does career development remain the employee's responsibility?**
2. **What evidence can support an accurate career self-evaluation?**
3. **What elements should be included in a professional goal?**
4. **Why should employees maintain a record of accomplishments?**
5. **How should an employee prepare for a performance evaluation?**
6. **What questions should be considered before investing in training?**
7. **What does responsible AI readiness require?**
8. **Why is professional networking more than asking for a job?**
9. **When should a résumé and career portfolio be updated?**
10. **What steps should be taken before making a career change?**

Feedback on the Correct Answers

1. Employers may provide opportunities, but employees must establish goals, develop skills, monitor change, and make career decisions.
2. Performance feedback, completed projects, measurable results, accomplishments, and changes in responsibility.
3. The intended result, purpose, required actions, resources, review date, and evidence of achievement.
4. The record supports evaluations, résumé updates, promotion applications, and future career decisions.
5. Review responsibilities and goals, gather evidence, identify challenges, prepare questions, and propose future goals.
6. Consider relevance, provider credibility, required practice, recognition, application, cost, and available alternatives.
7. Understanding AI's uses and limitations, protecting information, verifying output, recognizing bias, following policy, and applying human judgment.
8. Networking involves genuine relationships, shared learning, assistance, communication, and trust.
9. Update them regularly as new skills, responsibilities, accomplishments, and credentials are acquired.

10. Assess the reasons, research the field, identify transferable skills and gaps, test the direction, and develop a practical transition plan.

Practice Activity: Develop Your Continuing Career Plan

Complete the following plan:

Career-Development Area	Present Situation	Goal	Planned Action	Review Date
Knowledge and technical skills				
Communication and teamwork				
Digital and AI readiness				
Professional relationships				
Credentials or training				
Career advancement				
Alternative career plan				

Then identify:

- three accomplishments to add to your professional record;
- two skills you need to strengthen;
- one person who may provide mentoring or guidance;
- one professional relationship you should maintain;
- one update needed in your résumé or portfolio; and
- one action you will complete during the next 30 days.

Continuing Career-Development Checklist

Determine whether you can answer yes to each question:

- Can I evaluate my current career position honestly?
- Have I identified my strengths and development needs?
- Have I established short- and long-term goals?
- Do I maintain a record of accomplishments?
- Can I provide measurable evidence of my contributions?
- Am I prepared for performance evaluations?
- Do I select training based on actual career needs?
- Am I developing relevant digital and AI skills?
- Do I verify information and protect confidentiality when using AI?
- Am I building genuine professional relationships?
- Have I identified possible mentors?
- Is my résumé current?
- Does my career portfolio contain appropriate evidence?
- Do I understand the requirements for advancement?
- Have I considered an alternative career plan?
- Can I adapt my goals when circumstances change?
- Do I know how to leave a position professionally?

Unit Summary

Career development is a continuous process of assessment, planning, learning, contribution, and adjustment. Employees should establish goals, document accomplishments, strengthen their skills, seek feedback, build professional relationships, and remain prepared for advancement or change.

A job may provide an opportunity, but the employee must transform that opportunity into continued professional growth.

Part V Summary

Securing employment marks the beginning of a new professional stage. Employees must prepare carefully, learn during the first 90 days, demonstrate workplace professionalism, and continue developing throughout their careers.

Long-term success depends on more than technical ability. It requires reliability, communication, ethical judgment, adaptability, responsible technology use, constructive relationships, and lifelong learning.

Conclusion: The COACH Guide

The COACH Guide has presented career development as a systematic and active process. It began by helping job seekers assess where they are, determine where they want to go, and develop a strategy for reaching their goals. It then guided them through the job search, application and résumé process, interview, transition into employment, and continued career development.

The Guide's central message is simple:

❖ **Looking for a job is a job itself. Treat it as an investment in your future.**

Career success rarely results from chance alone. It requires self-assessment, planning, preparation, action, evaluation, and adjustment. Conditions may change, opportunities may appear unexpectedly, and some plans may not succeed immediately. The effective job seeker or employee learns from each experience and continues moving forward.

Remember:

✓ **Chart before you start; test before you invest.**

Most importantly, *The COACH Guide* is intended to help people become active managers of their own careers. It does not promise to give someone a job. It provides the tools, examples, activities, and guidance needed to pursue work systematically and develop the ability to continue progressing independently.

In the spirit of the Guide's guiding philosophy:

❖ **Do not give a person a fish; teach that person how to fish.**

🌈 ***The ultimate purpose of The COACH Guide is not merely to help learners obtain one job. It is to help them develop the knowledge, judgment, confidence, and career-management skills needed to pursue meaningful work throughout their lives.***