

How to cope with the emotional stress of losing your job  
How to pay your bills when you have no paycheck or savings  
Plus a complete job-search plan in 34 easy-to-read pages

# Surviving a Layoff

Your Guide to a Soft Landing  
and a Smooth Re-entry

**Harry Dahlstrom**

***This PDF document  
shows the Table of Contents  
plus the first page in each chapter of  
Surviving A Layoff  
2025/26 edition***

## 10 tips to make your layoff a little easier

- 1 **Don't feel guilty about being laid off.** A layoff is not a firing. You did nothing wrong. Future employers know that, "lack of work," is the main reason people are laid off.
- 2 **Tell your family.** Tell them as soon as you get home. You might say, "I have sad news about my job. I've been laid off. The layoff is effective today and the decision is final."
- 3 **Acknowledge the emotions of losing your job.** You may feel waves of sadness and anger following your layoff. These emotions are common and usually pass after a week or so. But, if you are still grieving after two weeks, talk to your doctor. You may have a touch of depression, which can be treated. If you have thoughts of hurting yourself, or hurting someone else, call 911. Help is only minutes away.
- 4 **Relax and do the things you love to do.** Try to get your mind off, "the job." Spend time with people you enjoy. Take a day trip. Volunteer. Take a class. Read a good novel.
- 5 **Sign up for unemployment benefits.** Contact your state's Unemployment Insurance office to see if you are qualified to receive payments. Google, *Unemployment Insurance, plus your state's name*, for office locations and requirements.
- 6 **Extend your health-care coverage.** Ask your former employer's human-resource office about the rules and costs for extending your health-care coverage under the COBRA plan.
- 7 **Conserve your money.** Hold a family meeting. Ask for ideas to cut unnecessary spending. Get everyone to agree on a spending plan—and stick to that plan.
- 8 **Call your creditors.** Mortgage, rent, auto loan, insurance, utilities, credit cards, taxes—call them all. Explain that you have been laid off. Ask if you could go on a reduced monthly-payment plan until you find another job.
- 9 **Work on your resume.** Read some help ads and job postings to see which skills today's hiring managers really want. Build your resume based on the skills today's employers need.
- 10 **Line up some job interviews.** Make a list of all the people you know who work in the same occupation or field as you. Ask if they would give your resume to their managers and put in a good word for you. Visit the web sites of your favorite companies and apply for jobs posted on their employment pages. Apply for jobs posted on job sites like Indeed, Careerbuilder, LinkedIn, and Monster. If you have questions or you need some help, visit your local American Job Center for career counseling, job-search workshops, job listings, career fairs, and other services.

From, *Surviving A Layoff* © Harry Dahlstrom

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# **Surviving A Layoff**

by Harry Dahlstrom

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Be sure to download the FREE, "US Employment Snapshot" at [www.DahlstromCo.com](http://www.DahlstromCo.com). It has current data on employment and unemployment by industry and occupation.

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## A layoff is not your fault.

You didn't do anything wrong. Losing your job because you were laid off is not your fault. Don't confuse a layoff with a firing. They are two different things.

### **What's the difference between a firing and a layoff?**

Firings remove people. Layoffs remove jobs.

People who are fired usually did something to deserve losing their jobs— like theft, chronic absenteeism, or refusing to do the work.

People who are laid off did nothing wrong. Their job ended, usually because there wasn't enough work. The job or shift was abolished, or the plant closed.

### **How to tell your family that you've lost your job.**

Try not to be dramatic or timid. Say it clearly.

You might say, "I have sad news about my job. I've been laid off. The layoff is effective today and the decision is final."

Stress that you were laid off, not fired, and that the decision is final.

Layoffs are emotional and you'll want to talk about it with your family. So, explain what happened—who laid you off, where they did it, what they said, how they said it, how you felt, and what you said to them.

Mention the names of the other people who were laid off with you, as well as those who were not, and how everyone felt.

Introduce some hope. Tell your family that lots of people find new jobs in just a few months and many also find better jobs.

You're not alone, 15 million people lost their jobs in 2024, that's 1.7 million people per month.

—U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, JOLTS

# Take some time to heal after your layoff.

People react differently to losing their job. Some can shrug it off as if nothing happened. Some need time to grieve. A few are so wounded, they may need some help.

## **Time is important in the grieving process.**

Whenever we lose something that's important to us, we grieve. Grieving is an emotional process that helps us cope with our loss. It has four basic stages:

- **Shock**, a disbelief that this has happened to you
- **Anger**, a feeling that you have been wronged
- **Mourning**, a sadness and longing for what is gone
- **Acceptance**, the eventual desire to get on with your life

## **Shock**

Even though most people did suspect that a layoff was coming, many are shocked and surprised when it actually happens.

Most people can handle the shock. It usually wears off after a few days.

But some people do have difficulty with it and may do irrational things. For example, some try to escape by going on lavish spending sprees or taking expensive vacations when they should be conserving their finances. Others rush to return their new TV, car, or furniture and cancel the debt. A few will pack up and move away in the middle of the night.

Try not to make any important decisions for a few days after your job loss. Instead, give the shock a few days to wear off. Try to relax. Do the things you normally love to do. Spend some time with your family. Take a day trip. Read a novel. Clean the garage. Get away from "the job."

911

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or hurting someone else, pick up a phone and dial 911. Help is only a phone call away.

## How to pay your bills when you have no paycheck or savings.

Money. Here's a subject that really scares jobless people. Now, before you panic, take a deep breath, exhale, and relax. We're going to walk through your money problems and show you a few things you might not know—things that could make your hard times a bit more bearable.

### How to get started.

The first thing you need to do is to sign up for unemployment-insurance benefits from your state.

### Don't be embarrassed to sign up for unemployment benefits.

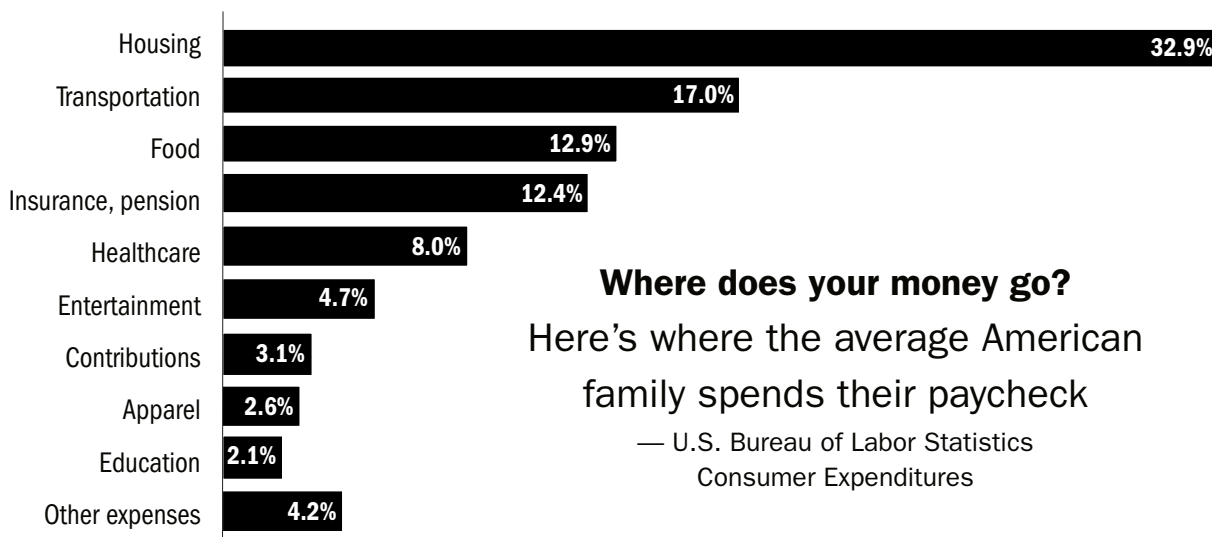
The government requires employers to buy unemployment insurance for their employees. This insurance provides a financial cushion for employees who lose their jobs.

It's insurance, not a handout. Your employer paid for this insurance. Don't be embarrassed about signing up for it. Do it.

### How to file a claim.

Each state has different rules for eligibility. So, call your local benefits office and ask how to file a claim. You can find their telephone number by Googling "unemployment insurance" and your state's name.

When you call, the benefits agent will ask a few questions to see whether you are qualified to receive benefits. So, have the following information handy; your Social Security Number or alien registration number if you are not a citizen, your last day of employment, your employer's name and address, and the reason you are no longer working.



## Would this be a good time to consider a new line of work?

After losing their jobs, a lot of people think about switching to a new line of work. Whether you're happy with your current line of work or not, it's nice to know you have other options.

### **What kind of work should you switch to?**

First, you don't have to switch careers at all. If you're happy with the work you do, or if it's impractical for you to change careers, stay put. But, if you've ever wondered whether you are more suited to a different kind of work, now is the time to check.

### **How to explore new careers.**

- **Start with your wish list.** What kind of job excites you? What kind of job would you like to do if you could start your life all over again?
- **Think about your hobbies and interests.** Could you turn something you love into a new career?
- **Think of the things you can do.** Do you have a special talent, skill, or ability that you could turn into a career?
- **Think about the special knowledge you**

**have.** Could you apply anything you know to a new career?

• **Think of the people you know.** Does someone have the kind of job, or work, that you would like to have?

### **Not sure about any of those?**

Would you like a more scientific approach to selecting a career? Log onto a computer and Google, "career tests."


These career tests ask about 30 multiple-choice questions. They analyze your answers and come up with a personality profile. Then, they match your profile to several career fields that go well with your personality type.

Most of the tests are free, so give them a try. The results can be very interesting. One caution, however—no test is totally accurate. Take several tests and use the results only as a guide.

The Standard Occupational Classification System includes over 840 separate U.S. occupations.

—U.S. Department of Labor

# Job openings and wages for the 200 largest U.S. occupations, through 2033



**Occupational Data**

- 1 Occupation titles
- 2 Employment 2023, in thousands
- 3 Employment 2033, in thousands
- 4 Average annual job openings, in 000
- 5 Median annual wage, in US dollars
- 6 Typical entry-level education

**Educational Levels**

- NF No formal education required
- HS High school diploma or equivalent
- PS Post-secondary education, non degree
- SC Some college, no degree
- AD Associate's degree
- BD Bachelor's degree
- MD Master's degree
- DP Doctor or Professional degrees

Preschool teachers	528.5	551.8	61.4	\$37,130	AD	Parts salespersons	267.9	271.2	29.7	\$36,860	NF
Kindergarten teachers	122.7	121.8	13.3	\$62,690	BD	Retail salespersons	3,810.1	3,814.7	552.5	\$33,680	NF
Elementary school teachers	1441	1430.4	93.2	\$63,680	BD	Insurance sales agents	547.6	581.0	47.1	\$59,080	HS
Middle school teachers	640.0	635.3	41.4	\$64,290	BD	Securities, commodities	513.8	547.9	41.0	\$76,900	BD
Secondary school teachers	1,071.4	1,064.5	64.0	\$65,220	BD	Sales representatives	1,060.6	1,137.0	146.8	\$54,550	HS
Special education teachers	475.2	491.6	38.0	\$59,610	BD	Sales, wholesale, manufacturing	1,356.1	1,366.1	120.0	\$65,630	HS
Self-enrichment teachers	370.1	382.8	46.1	\$45,330	HS	Real estate sales agents	430.7	438.7	36.4	\$54,300	HS
Librarians	134.8	143.4	14.7	\$59,050	MD	Telemarketers	85.2	66.8	8.0	\$34,480	NF
Teacher assistants	1,380.3	1,435.7	153.9	\$26,970	SC						
<b>Office, Administrative Support</b>											
Bill, account collectors	196.5	177.8	17.0	\$44,250	HS						
Billing, posting clerks	449.0	451.3	45.3	\$45,590	HS						
Bookkeeping, accounting, auditing	1,663.8	1,579.9	174.9	\$47,440	HS						
Payroll, timekeeping	160.3	136.2	12.8	\$52,240	HS						
Tellers	350.3	298.8	27.3	\$37,640	HS						
Customer service	2,954.6	2,805.8	365.3	\$39,680	HS						
File clerks	87.2	73.9	8.3	\$38,130	HS						
Hotel, motel, resort desk clerks	271.3	290.2	45.9	\$30,790	HS						
Loan interviewers, clerks	206.1	201.2	16.3	\$47,380	HS						
Human resources clerks	104.2	99.2	10.5	\$47,710	AD						
Receptionists, information clerks	1,054.5	1,048.8	137.8	\$35,840	HS						
Dispatchers	215.4	215.7	19.6	\$46,860	HS						
Postal service mail carriers	316.7	307.1	21.9	\$56,330	HS						
Shipping, receiving, inventory clerks	848.7	784.2	71.6	\$39,780	HS						
Stock clerks, order fillers	2,056.6	2,091.3	279.5	\$25,700	HS						
Executive secretaries	516.1	517.2	52.6	\$70,310	HS						
Legal secretaries, assistants	154.2	146.3	18.1	\$50,680	HS						
Medical secretaries, assistants	768.9	810.1	82.4	\$40,640	HS						
Secretaries, assistants	1,982.3	1,976.2	214.4	\$44,280	HS						
Data entry keyers	163.9	122.8	11.6	\$37,790	HS						
Insurance claims, processing clerks	271.8	261.3	22.3	\$46,900	HS						
Office clerks, general	2,645.8	2,498.2	284.6	\$40,480	HS						
<b>Construction, Extraction</b>											
Carpenters	923.1	961.6	76.5	\$56,350	HS						
Cement masons	211.8	210.3	15.2	\$50,720	NF						
Construction laborers	1,401.2	1,516.6	133.1	\$45,300	NF						
Operating engineers	468.0	487.6	41.5	\$56,160	HS						
<b>Healthcare Support</b>											
Home health aides	831.8	1,136.6	140.8	\$24,200	HS						
Massage therapists	147.1	173.2	22.8	\$55,310	PS						
Dental assistants	376.5	408.0	54.9	\$46,540	PS						
Medical assistants	783.9	901.9	119.8	\$42,000	HS						
<b>Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians</b>											
Pharmacists	337.7	355.9	14.2	\$136,030	DP						
Physicians, surgeons	756.8	812.2	28.5	\$208,000	DP						
Registered nurses	3,300.1	3,497.3	194.5	\$86,070	AD						
Physical therapists	259.2	296.0	13.6	\$99,710	DP						
Veterinarians	88.2	105.0	4.3	\$119,100	DP						
Clinical laboratory	344.2	362.5	24.2	\$60,780	BD						
Dental hygienists	219.8	243.5	17.9	\$74,820	AD						
Radiologic technologists	227.8	241.0	13.3	\$73,410	AD						
Emergency medical	262.1	280.8	19.9	\$34,320	PS						
Pharmacy technicians	463.9	497.2	47.4	\$40,300	HS						
Licensed practical nurses	657.8	674.7	54.0	\$59,730	PS						
Medical records	215.5	238.6	16.8	\$40,350	PS						
<b>Management</b>											
Chief executives	313.9	331.1	23.0	\$206,680	BD						
General operations managers	3,630.1	3,840.5	320.8	\$101,280	AD						
Marketing managers	389.1	420.8	34.8	\$157,620	BD						
Sales managers	584.8	619.1	48.6	\$135,160	BD						
Administrative services managers	300.2	322.0	28.1	\$96,180	HS						
Computer, information systems	613.5	720.4	54.7	\$169,510	BD						
Financial managers	837.1	975.3	75.1	\$156,100	BD						
Industrial production managers	230.1	236.7	17.1	\$116,970	BD						
Farmers, ranchers, agri. managers	856.6	842.9	88.5	\$83,770	HS						
Construction managers	520.9	568.5	45.8	\$104,900	BD						
Education, K-12 administrators	316.6	315.0	20.8	\$103,460	MD						
Education, postsecondary administrators	216.4	222.7	15.2	\$102,610	MD						
Architectural, engineering managers	210.2	221.8	15.0	\$165,370	BD						
Food service managers	393.6	399.5	44.5	\$63,060	HS						
Medical, health services managers	562.7	723.3	61.4	\$110,680	BD						
Property, real estate managers	487.1	482.2	37.8	\$62,850	HS						
Social, community service managers	199.5	215.9	17.8	\$77,030	BD						
<b>Business &amp; Finance</b>											

# Show employers that you have the “right stuff.”

Every occupation has certain job requirements. Carpenters must know how to read building plans. Sales people must know how to close a sale. Customer-service people must know how to work with difficult people. Managers must know how to motivate people to get the job done. What’s the right stuff for your occupation? Don’t guess. Find out. Show that you have the technical skills employers are looking for. Here’s how—

### Let’s take it from the beginning...

I’m sure you know that a dental hygienist cleans your teeth. So, let’s use that occupation in the following example.

#### 1. Name the job you want.

- *Dental Hygienist*

#### 2. List the requirements of the job.

- *Remove calculus and plaque*
- *Take and process dental x-rays*
- *Teach patient oral-hygiene strategies*
- *Perform oral and neck screening*
- *Perform documentation and office management activities*

#### 3. Select the first requirement from your list.

- *Remove calculus and plaque, also known as cleanings*

#### 4. Give an example of when or where you performed it.

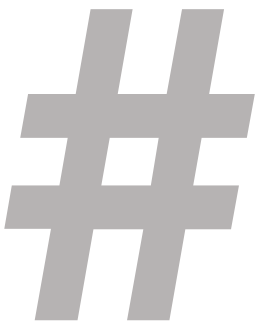
- *Cleanings: Worked three years as a dental hygienist removing calculus and plaque at Dr. Smiley’s*

#### 5. Add a short example to show what you accomplished.

- *Cleanings: 60 patients per month. Gentle and trusted, 35% of patients ask for me by name*

#### 6. Repeat steps 3, 4, and 5 for each additional job requirement on your list.

• • • •



“Lack of technical skills,” is the number-one reason employers have trouble filling job openings

—Manpower

## Use the “right stuff” to build a powerful resume.

Looking for a job? Then, you need a resume. Your resume is your calling card, your advertisement, your brochure, your flyer. It’s a one-page handout that shows what a great catch you are.

### **What can you do with a resume?**

Mail it. Email it. Post it online. Ask friends to give it to their managers. Hand it out at job fairs. Give it to employment agencies.

The idea is to get it into the hands of as many hiring managers as you can. If a hiring manager likes what she sees in your resume, you could get invited to a job interview.

### **What if you’re not a good writer?”**

That’s okay. Writing your resume is easy. You completed all the heavy thinking in the last chapter. All that’s left to do is type it up.

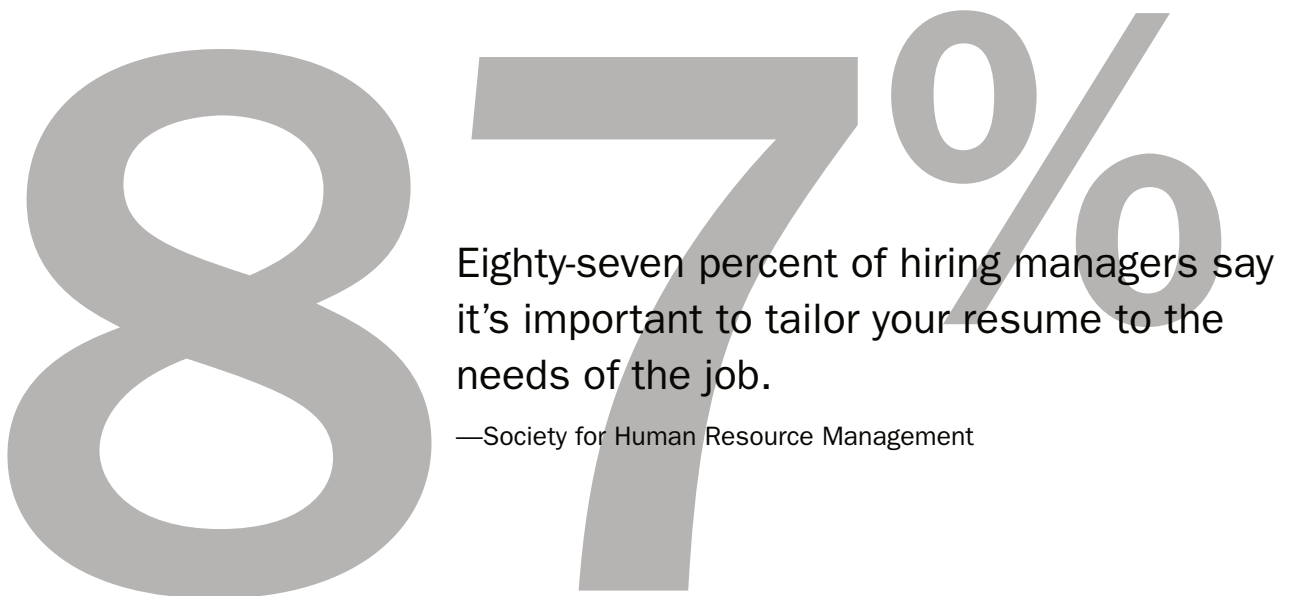
### **Is there some official format or design you must use?**

No. There is no official format for writing your resume. You can set up your resume any way you like. Feel free to change, modify, expand, ignore, or simplify any of the following suggestions. But most people do include the following topics in their resumes:

#### **1. Your contact information**

Tell employers who you are and how they can reach you.

At the top of the page, type your full name, mailing address, telephone number with area code, plus your text or email address.



Eighty-seven percent of hiring managers say it’s important to tailor your resume to the needs of the job.

—Society for Human Resource Management

## Seven ways to get job interviews.

The job interview is your chance to sit down, face-to-face, with a hiring manager and convince her that she should hire you instead of someone else. How do you get a job interview? Here are seven easy ways...

### • **Employee referrals**

Ask anyone you know, “How’d you get your job?” Most will tell you, “A friend helped me get a job where she works.”

When an employee recommends, or refers, a friend for a job, that’s known as an employee referral.

Hiring managers like to hire the friends of their workers. Nine out of ten hiring managers say it’s their best source for recruiting above-average people. Friends are so valuable, some employers will pay a finder’s fee to an employee who brings in a new hire.

As the friend of an employee, you’ll have some special advantages over an outsider. Your inside employee knows when a coworker is about to leave the job. She knows when the team is short-handed and needs help. She knows when the manager is planning to hire someone new.

Your inside employee can also tell you about the hiring manager—her interviewing style, the issues she is most concerned about, the type of person she wants for the job, the questions she is likely to ask, and the things you can do or say to impress the manager.

And here’s a bonus—unlike answering a help-wanted ad or a job posting, where dozens, even hundreds, of people might compete for the job, it’s not uncommon for friends to be hired with little or no competition at all.

### **How to get started:**

Make a list of all the people you know who work in the same field or occupation as you. Create that list from your phone contacts, social media, family, friends, relatives, neighbors, and even your old friends. Add to your list as days go by and you remember more names.



Three sources account for 76% of all new job hires

- Employee referrals create 39.9%
- Employer career sites create 21.2%
- Job boards create 14.6%

—Jobvite Index

## Let AIDA help you write a better cover letter.

A cover letter is a personal letter that you send with your resume or job application. It's the first thing the hiring manager sees when she opens your envelope or email. It's your hello, your smile, your chance to create a connection, your reason for writing.

### **Does everyone send a cover letter with their resume and job application?**

No. Most people don't include a cover letter. And that's why you should send one. It shows that you're different. It shows that you are serious about that job and you cared enough to write.

### **Do you need to create a new letter each time you apply to a different company?**

Yes and no. You certainly want all employers to feel that you are writing to them personally. But, you can recycle paragraphs and include them in most of your letters.

### **Who should you address your letter to?**

This is important. The hiring manager is usually the manager of the department where you

want to work. If you want a job in human resources, send your letter to the human-resource manager. If you want to work in maintenance, send your letter to the maintenance manager. At a small business, send your letter to the owner of the business.

### **How to get the manager's name.**

If you have a referral from a friend, ask that friend for the hiring manager's full name, job title, department, company name, full address, city, state, and zip code. Make sure the manager's name, title, and address are accurate and spelled correctly.

If you are writing to a company and you don't know the manager's name, call the company and ask for the manager's name and full address. The receptionist who answers your call will be glad to give you the information you need.



Eighty-six percent of executives said cover letters are important when evaluating job candidates.

—National Association of Workforce Development Professionals

## Get ready for the hiring manager's phone call.

You've found a job opening and applied for the position. Now, if the hiring manager likes what she sees in your resume and cover letter, she'll give you a call. Don't underestimate the importance of this phone call. It's actually a screening interview. The purpose of the call is to decide whether to invite you to a face-to-face job interview, or not. Here are five tips to help you pass the screen and win an invitation to the interview.

### 1. Have a professional greeting.

You never know when an employer might call, so answer every phone call with a professional greeting.

Sure, your friends will laugh when they call and hear you say, "Hello. This is Ken Dooit. How can I help you?" But the hiring managers will love it.

Also, record a new phone message. Something short and professional like this, "Hello. This is Ken Dooit. I'm not able to answer the phone. Please leave your name, phone number, and a brief message. I do check my messages often. I'll return your call as soon as possible. Thank you."

### 2. When they call you, most hiring managers will ask if this is a convenient time to speak with you.

Managers know that you have a life. If you're at work, driving your car, or sitting in the dentist's chair, it's okay to arrange another time to talk.

When you return a call, choose a place where you'll be free from noise, interruptions, and where your cell phone has good reception.

You might say, "Good afternoon, Ms. Hireyou. My name is Ken Dooit. I'm returning your phone call. I have applied for your job opening as a tight-rope walker."

### 3. Prepare and rehearse like this is a real interview.

Because it is. If you bomb this screening interview, you won't get the face-to-face interview, or the job offer.

Your telephone conversation with a hiring manager could last between ten minutes and an hour.

—*Wall Street Journal*



## Find three people who will give you a, “positive recommendation.”

You are a good worker. You give more than the minimum. You show up every day and you’re never late. You’re easy going and everybody likes you. Well, that’s great but the hiring manager wants proof. She wants to talk to three people who can vouch for you.

### **Who should you include as references?**

Most hiring managers want three reliable references who are not related to you. Ideally, they want the name of your former boss.

Other good references might include former supervisors, coworkers, customers, teachers, coaches, and prominent people who know you. Prominent people might include an attorney, a banker, a doctor, a member of the clergy, or a local business owner.

### **Always ask before offering someone’s name as a job reference.**

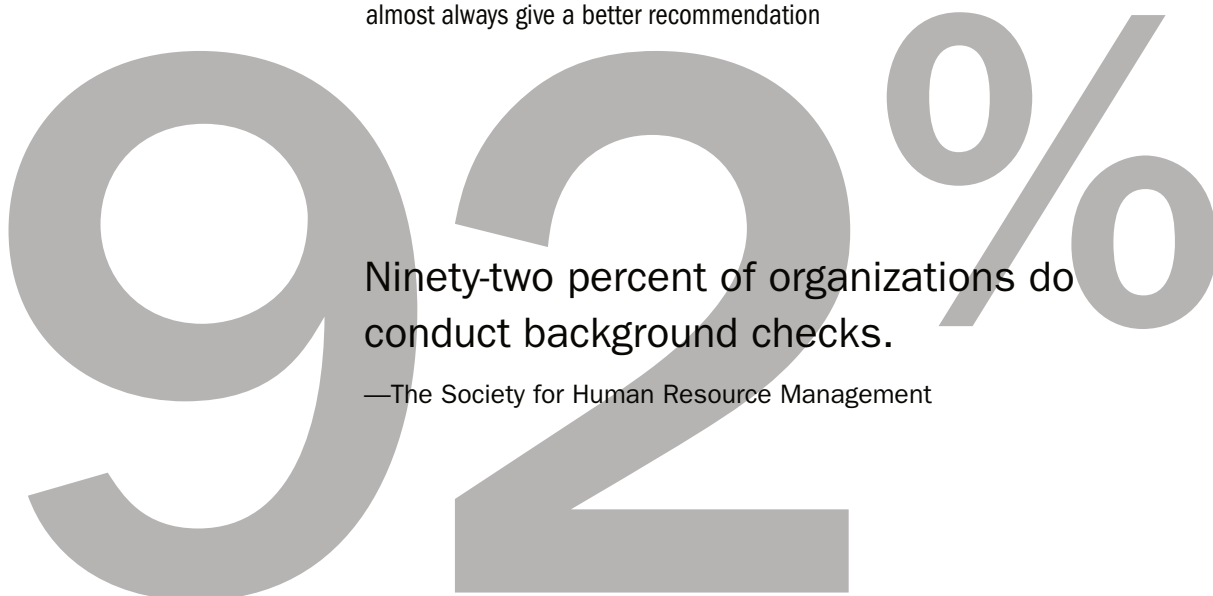
People who agree to serve as references almost always give a better recommendation

than those who are not asked.

Those who are NOT asked are often caught off guard. They might struggle to remember who you are, what you did, and when you worked for them. To a hiring manager, this hesitation might sound like your reference is not eager to recommend you.

### **What should you say? How do you ask someone to be a reference?**

First, call or visit them. Don’t ask by text or email. You need to see each person’s face or hear their voice when you ask.



## Enthusiasm, the key to a great interview.

Hiring managers agree—enthusiasm separates the winners from the losers. It can be more important than experience. “Give me someone who’s enthusiastic and motivated,” explained one manager, “someone who’s alert and alive... someone who’s interested in what we do here... someone who’s excited about coming to work for me... someone who wants to help me as much as I want to help them.”

### **You don’t need to be one of those loud, back-slapping types.**

Just be yourself.

### **Dress like you belong there.**

Wear the clothes that you would wear on the job. If you’re not sure what to wear, call the company and ask someone in their human resource department. They’ll be glad to help.

### **Plan to arrive ten-minutes early for your interview.**

It shows that you are excited to be there. Hiring managers are clock watchers. They’ll notice.

### **Be extra courteous.**

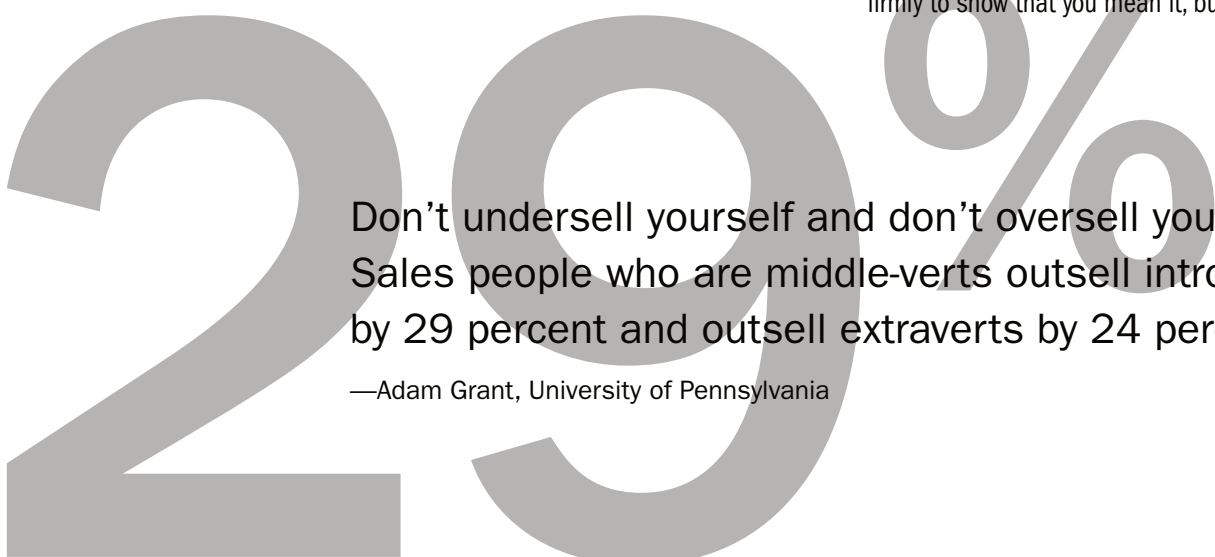
Say hello, smile, and be friendly to everyone you meet. You can bet that the manager will ask what they thought of you, after you’ve left the building.

### **Offer a professional greeting.**

When you meet the manager, stand up straight, look her in the eye, smile, extend a firm handshake, and say, “Ms. Joboffer, thank you so much for taking the time to interview me for your (cat herding) position.”

### **About that handshake....**

Engage the full hand, palm to palm. Grip firmly to show that you mean it, but don’t



Don’t undersell yourself and don’t oversell yourself. Sales people who are middle-verts outsell introverts by 29 percent and outsell extraverts by 24 percent.

—Adam Grant, University of Pennsylvania

## Navigate your way through a job interview.

Managers are expert interviewers, and they know that you're going to be nervous. To help you relax and feel comfortable, they'll conduct the interview as if it were a casual, friendly conversation. Now, each manager has her own style and personality. There is no set format to a job interview. But there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. So, let's walk through the interview from beginning to end and see how it unfolds.

### • Your arrival

Come prepared for each interview. Don't wing it. Visit the company's website. Know who they are, what they do, and have a good reason why you want to work there.


When you first arrive, check in with the receptionist. Smile and introduce yourself. You might say, "Hi, my name is Luke Atmenow. I have a 4:14 appointment with Ms. Ida Hireyou in the Maple Syrup Department. When you have a moment could you please let her know that I'm here? Thank you."

If you're wearing a winter coat or a raincoat,

ask where you can hang your coat. Don't bring it into the interview with you. You'll look awkward carrying it. Plus, carrying a coat gives the impression that this is a quick meeting and you'll be in and out in just a few minutes. Besides, what will you do with it once you're in the hiring manager's office? It's best if you hang your coat in the waiting room.

After checking your coat, visit the rest room. Check your hair, teeth, clothes, and turn off your phone. Some hiring managers say they would not hire someone who took a cell call during a job interview.

Oh, while you're in the rest room, try this. Lock yourself into a stall. Then, strike the Superman pose. You know, feet apart, standing tall, hands on your hips, gazing upward. Hold that pose



The average job interview lasts about 55 minutes. Interviews for management-level positions last about 86 minutes.

—Robert Half Recruitment

# 50 questions to expect during your job interview.

## 1. “Tell me a little about yourself?”

Give your 15-second sales pitch from page 29. After you've given your sales pitch, hand the hiring manager a fresh copy of your resume plus your typed list of references. Next, this is important—ask for the hiring manager's business card. That business card will have all the manager's contact information, including her email address and direct phone number. You'll need this information so you can stay in touch with the hiring manager after the interview is over.

## 2. “What you know about my company?”

Before you go on the interview, be sure to visit the company's website. Get an overview of their key products and services. Google the company's name for news. Find out who they are, what they do, and why you want to work for them.

## 3. “Why did you decide to become a (lion tamer)?”

Tell your story. Include lots of detail and use hand gestures and facial expressions to bring your story to life. Add a touch of humor when appropriate.

## 4. “What skills or requirements do you think are needed for this job?”

Refer back to pages 18 and 19. Use your fingers and count off the job requirements: 1... 2... 3... 4... 5...

## 5. “What motivates you to do a good job?”

Money is not a good answer. Instead, try this: “Having responsibilities and getting a pat on the back when the job is done right.”

## 6. “Why is customer service so important in business today?”

“Customers who receive helpful service from friendly employees are more apt to come back again and again. They are also more apt to tell their friends about us. Good service means more business.”

## 7. “Why should I hire you instead of someone more qualified?”

Too your horn. Tell the manager that you have more than good skills to offer—you're a team player, you're not afraid of hard work, you're a quick learner, you're reliable, you give more than just the minimum effort, and you want to work for this company because...

## 8. “Did you ever have a disagreement with your boss?”

Answer “yes” and you're a troublemaker, answer “no” and you're a wimp. Find the middle ground: “Sure we disagreed. But we worked well together. For example...”

## 9. “Tell me about the toughest boss you ever worked for.”

Never badmouth a former boss, it says you're a troublemaker. Instead, turn a negative into a positive. “That would be Mr. Gray. He was a

## 20. “As a youngster, what did you do to earn your own spending money?”

Baby-sitting, lemonade stand, newspaper route, shoveling snow, mowing lawns, and other jobs show early signs of ambition and a respect for work.

## 21. “What do you do to relax after work?”

Don't brag about auto racing, bungee jumping, chain-saw juggling, or any other sport that might be dangerous. They suggest a likelihood of injury and an absence from work. Instead, mention something wholesome like athletics, a hobby, a project, traveling, or entertaining friends.

## 22. “Are you at your best when working alone or in a group?”

“Both. I enjoy working as part of a team and I can work independently to get my share of the work done. For example...”

## 23. “Would you rather be in charge of a project or be part of the team?”

“Either. I'm not afraid to take responsibility and I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves and pitch in.”

## 24. “Have you ever been fired from a job?”

Everybody gets fired from a job at least once in their lifetime. And don't be afraid to tell the truth if it was your fault. Fessing up says that you are a responsible, mature adult. Explain what happened. Explain what you learned. Explain what you would do differently if the same situation happened again.

## 25. “Tell me about your strengths.”

From pages 18 and 19, you know the five or six requirements needed to do the job you want. Choose your strongest job requirements and offer examples to show how you excelled.

## 26. “What are your weaknesses?”

Choose one or two weaknesses that are not part of the job requirements. Be sure to include an action point to show what you did about each weakness. For instance, “I'm terrified of public speaking. I get so nervous I start to shake. So, I took an online stand-up comedy class to help get over the jitters and entertain my friends.”

## 27. “Tell me about your favorite accomplishment.”

A personal touch works well here, such as your marriage, birth of a child, or helping someone in need. You could also offer something both personal and benevolent. “I'm no athlete, but I did run a 5-kilometer road race in under 45 minutes—and I raised over \$1,000 in pledges for a favorite charity. I'm proud of that!”

## 28. “Who did you ask to serve as personal references and why did you choose them?”

“I don't see any problems. I genuinely like people. I'm easy to coach and I'm easy to work with. For example...”

## 37. “What would you do if one supervisor told you to do something—and another supervisor told you not to do it?”

The manager wants to see how you would handle a dilemma. Try this: Think about what would happen if you did act, and what would happen if you did not act. Write down the pros and cons of each. Make a decision.

## 38. “Tell me about a time when you broke the rules.”

Sometimes it's necessary to break the rules. Just make sure your reasoning and judgement are sound.

## 39. “Can you tell me about a time when a supervisor was not pleased with your work?”

The manager wants to know how you react to criticism. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when preparing your answer: Top employees see criticism as a learning experience, not a reprimand. They listen without arguing or becoming defensive. They learn what needs to be done differently. They agree to the changes and implement them. They follow up by asking the supervisor for a second review. They also regain their enthusiasm and confidence quickly.

## 40. “Tell me about a time when you were swamped with work and how you handled it.”

The manager wants to know how you prioritize your time. Experts suggest you start by making a list of all the tasks you need to do today. Next, arrange those tasks from most important to least important. Then, select the task which is most urgent. Start there.

## 41. “Please tell me about a time when you showed initiative at work.”

Initiative is not about working harder. Initiative is about doing more than what your job requires. For example: Taking on a new responsibility without being asked, taking a class or reading a book to learn a new skill, or noticing a problem on the horizon and taking action to correct it.

## 42. “Describe a difficult decision you had to make.”

The manager wants to know about your decision-making skills. Here's a basic decision-making formula: Define the problem, learn what others did in similar situations, list the pros and cons for each option, then choose the best option.

## 43. “Tell me about a time when you failed.”

Everybody fails. What's important is the lesson learned from the failure. Keep these tips in mind when planning your answer. Describe the event, describe the goal you hoped to achieve, describe the failed outcome, explain what went wrong, and then explain the lesson you

## The art of the follow-up.

When you get home from your interview, send the manager a thank-you note. Two days later, send the manager an *idea* note. A week after your interview, pick up the phone and give the manager a call. Then, stay in touch with that hiring manager.

### 1. Send a thank-you note.

Most job hunters do send thank-you notes. You should send them too.

Keep in mind that businesses are formal. Manners are important. Thank-you notes are expected. Managers look for these things.

Keep your thank-you note brief.

- Thank the manager for meeting with you and mention the date and job title you interviewed for.
- Say that you want the job.
- Give one or two solid reasons why the hiring manager should offer you the job.
- Offer the manager a thirty-day trial period to prove yourself.

- Say that you'd like to call in a week or so to see if she's made a decision.

Write your thank-you note and send it off within 24 hours of the interview while the manager still remembers you.

### 2. Send an idea note.

Now, here's something hardly any of your competitors will try—

During your interview, the manager asked if you had any questions for her. You said, "Yes, what are the major challenges the new hire will face in this job?"

Now, think about the manager's answer. If the problems are not confidential, discuss them with a friend, look for solutions online, or ask



Sixty percent of job hunters do send thank-you notes to the people who interviewed them.

—Society for Human Resource Management

## EXTRA—

### How to explain your unemployment to a hiring manager.

If you've been out of work for several months, you can bet that every hiring manager you're going to meet will ask, "What did you do during your months of unemployment?"

**IDEALLY**, you volunteered a few days a week at a hospital, you took some night classes and learned a new job skill, you ran the Boston Marathon, and your biography appeared in *Who's Who*.

**But you didn't. No one does.**

Instead, just tell the truth. Hiring managers want to know that you didn't sit on your couch for six months watching TV.

So, think of a few events where you helped someone or the times when you learned something useful. Then string them together in a quick, four-point answer. Something upbeat and positive, like—

1. "I took my elderly neighbor to her doctor's appointments. It was nice to spend some time with her again."

2. "I learned to cook with Martha Stewart on TV. I can make a wonderful, mouth-watering, chicken fricassee."

3. "I also helped my cousin demo her kitchen. The physical labor was a stress reliever, and I learned a little about construction. Or, should I say de-construction?"

4. "But mostly, I spent my time applying to online job openings,"

"It wasn't until my friend, Horace Handover, gave my resume to you, and you called me. That's when I realized—I should have put more time into networking."

"If not for him, I wouldn't be here talking with you today."

—Best wishes, Harry Dahlstrom