



Unlocking Career Opportunities: The Student's Career Services Handbook

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About Us

At the Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College Career Services Office, our purpose is evident: we are dedicated to supporting you throughout your career development. From selecting the right major to exploring career opportunities, we are here to offer advice and resources. Whether you need guidance on resume building, job searching, or preparing for interviews, our team is committed to providing the support and direction you need to achieve success. Your professional growth is our top priority, and we are here to help you every step of the way.

Our Services

- Resumes and Cover Letter Assistance
- Jobs and Internship Search
- Events
- Interview Preparation
- Student Employment
- LinkedIn Headshots
- Career Counseling
- Online Resources
- Competencies and Career Readiness

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Call or register online to make an appointment.

College Central Network

When you're ready to take the next step, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College's Career Services Portal will help you make a lasting impression. As an OCtech student, you have full access to our specialized online toolkit complete with step-by-step tutorials and adaptable templates to support your career search. We encourage you to visit the portal often throughout your time at OCtech for relevant links, articles, announcements and more.

Specific tools within the OCtech Career Services Portal are integrated into each program of study to assist you with transitioning your training into valuable career assets. You'll even retain access to your account after graduation, allowing you to further enhance your skills and stay updated.

Visit collegecentral.com/octech to create your profile and access your personal toolkit today!

OCtech's Career Services Portal helps you:

- Search for jobs posted exclusively to OCtech, as well as those available on the Jobs Central® and Intern Central® national boards.
- Build your resume with Resume Builder, or upload your resume to Resume Central® to apply directly for jobs and/or authorize it to be searched by employers. (Please note your resume will be reviewed by our office and must be approved before it can be sent to employers or submitted to posted jobs online.)
- Create an online portfolio in Career Portfolio Central® to support your resume and demonstrate your best work to employers.
- Review your job search history. Report offers/hires.
- Receive emails about programs, services and job-related topics.
- Gain access to announcements, upcoming events, career advice documents and videos, podcasts and career articles.

Remember, our associates are here for you, too! OCtech collaborates with an array of professional organizations, trade associations, businesses, government agencies, educational programs, healthcare organizations and more – all of which play a key role in creating opportunities for career advancement.

Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College Two- Year Career Planning Checklist

Year 1: Foundation & Exploration

Fall Semester: Self-Discovery & Exploration

- **Assess Strengths & Interests:** Complete self-assessments (e.g., personality tests, skills inventories, and interest inventories) to explore potential career paths.
- **Research Career Options:** Research industries, roles, and companies that align with your interests and skills.
- **Explore Internships:** Look for summer internships or part-time work that will allow you to gain experience in your field of interest.
- **Join Career-Related Clubs/Organizations:** Join student organizations related to your field of study to start networking.
- **Attend Career Fairs:** Participate in career fairs to get familiar with the companies and industries hiring in your field.
- **Schedule Career Counseling:** Meet with a career counselor to discuss your interests and receive guidance on your career path.

Spring Semester: Building Skills & Networking

- **Create a LinkedIn Profile:** Build a professional LinkedIn profile with your education, skills, and experiences.
- **Attend Networking Events:** Attend career-related events, workshops, and alumni networking nights to expand your network.
- **Volunteer or Get Involved:** Take on volunteer opportunities or leadership roles in clubs to build experience and transferable skills.
- **Update Resume:** Create a strong resume that reflects your skills, experiences, and academic achievements.
- **Start a Portfolio:** Begin a digital portfolio showcasing your work, projects, and accomplishments.
- **Research Graduate School Options (if applicable):** If you're considering graduate school, research programs and admission requirements.

Summer Break: Gain Hands-On Experience

- **Internship or Part-Time Job:** Pursue an internship or job related to your field to gain real-world experience.
- **Shadow Professionals:** Arrange informational interviews or job shadowing opportunities with professionals in your field to learn more about the work environment.

Year 2: Skill Refinement & Job Readiness

Fall Semester: Job Search Preparation

- **Refine Resume & Cover Letter:** Tailor your resume and cover letter to specific roles or industries you're interested in.
- **Start Applying for Internships/Jobs:** Begin applying for internships and full-time job opportunities.
- **Interview Preparation:** Prepare for interviews by practicing common questions and refining your interview skills.
- **Attend Career Workshops:** Participate in resume workshops, interview preparation sessions, and job search seminars.
- **Research Companies:** Deep dive into companies you're interested in—learn about their values, culture, and job opportunities.
- **Update LinkedIn Profile:** Ensure your LinkedIn profile is current, polished, and tailored to your desired career path.

Spring Semester: Finalizing Job Search & Networking

- **Continue Applying for Jobs/Internships:** Keep applying to job postings and internship opportunities that align with your career goals.
- **Prepare for Graduate School (if applicable):** If pursuing grad school, finalize applications and prepare for entrance exams (e.g., GRE, LSAT).
- **Network with Alumni:** Reach out to alumni for informational interviews or advice on breaking into your industry.
- **Attend Career Fairs & Employer Events:** Use these events to build connections and apply for positions.
- **Seek Feedback:** Have a mentor, career counselor, or professor review your resume, LinkedIn profile, and application materials for feedback.

Summer Break: Transition to Full-Time Employment or Further Education

- **Finalize Job Offers:** If you've received job offers, evaluate them carefully, considering factors like location, company culture, and benefits.
- **Prepare for Post-Graduation:** If you're graduating, prepare for the transition to full-time employment or further studies.
- **Continue Networking:** Stay in touch with professional contacts and continue building relationships within your industry.
- **Celebrate Your Achievements:** Reflect on your progress and celebrate your growth, whether you're heading into your first full-time job, an internship, or further education.

Major and Career Planning

Major and career planning is a thoughtful process of self-discovery that helps you determine your academic and professional direction. Understanding your interests, skills, values, and personality is essential in making informed decisions about your future.

Researching specific fields and career paths allows you to make well-informed choices that align with your goals. Self-reflection is a valuable first step in this process—identifying your strengths and interests will provide clarity and direction.

Use the sections below to explore key aspects of yourself and begin shaping your academic and career path.

What are your top three interests?	What are your top three strengths?	What are your top three skills?

Tip: If you need additional help identifying work values, CareerOneStop Work Values Matcher is a good assessment.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Careers/work-values-matcher.aspx>

Determining your interests, skills, and values gets you one step closer to helping you determine your major and/or career path. Career Test and Truity allows you to look at all three of these areas and explore majors/careers that are tied directly to these specific areas.

- [Career test - Fast Free Career Aptitude Test](#)
- [Free Personality Tests and Career Assessments | Truity](#)

INTERVIEWING

Interviews play a crucial role in securing full-time positions, internships, service opportunities, graduate/professional school admissions, and fellowships. They are one of the most critical components of the hiring and evaluation process, serving as an opportunity for both you and the interviewer to assess compatibility.

Preparation is key to a successful interview. Follow these steps to make a strong impression:

- Highlight your skills and interpersonal strengths.
- Provide specific examples of past experiences to demonstrate your qualifications.
- Assess whether the position and organization align with your career goals and values.
- Showcase your ability to perform the job successfully.
- Exhibit motivation and enthusiasm for the role.
- Demonstrate your fit within the organization's culture.

How to Prepare for an Interview

Proper preparation is essential for a successful interview. Follow these key steps to ensure you make a strong impression:

1. Research the Organization

- Understand the company's mission, values, and culture.
- Familiarize yourself with recent news, projects, or initiatives.
- Learn about the role and its responsibilities in detail.

2. Understand the Job Requirements

- Review the job description and identify key skills and qualifications.
- Prepare examples from your experience that align with the job's requirements.

3. Practice Common Interview Questions

- Prepare responses to frequently asked questions, such as:

- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “Why are you interested in this position?”
- “What are your strengths and weaknesses?”
- “Describe a time you faced a challenge and how you handled it.”

★ Use the **STAR method** (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure your responses.

4. Prepare Questions for the Interviewer

→ Demonstrate your interest by asking insightful questions, such as:

- “What does success look like in this role?”
- “Can you describe the company culture?”
- “What are the next steps in the hiring process?”

5. Dress Professionally

- Choose attire that aligns with the company’s dress code (business professional or business casual).
- Ensure your outfit is neat, clean, and appropriate for the industry.

6. Gather Necessary Materials

- Bring copies of your resume, a list of references, and any required documents.
- Have a notepad and pen for taking notes.

7. Practice Good Communication

- Maintain eye contact and use confident body language.
- Speak clearly and concisely.
- Listen actively and respond thoughtfully.

8. Follow Up After the Interview

- Send a thank-you email within 24 hours, expressing appreciation for the opportunity.
- Reiterate your enthusiasm for the role and briefly highlight key points from the interview.

Types of Interviews

Traditional Interviews

This type of interview follows a structured format, focusing on your resume. Interviewers will ask about your education, work experience, and extracurricular activities. The process is straightforward, so be prepared with specific examples that highlight your skills and qualifications.

Behavioral Interviews

Based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance, behavioral interviews are among the most commonly used. Questions often begin with phrases such as, *“Tell me about a time when...”* or *“Give me an example of when...”*. Candidates should use the **STAR** technique (Situation, Task, Action, and Result) to effectively demonstrate how their experiences align with the job requirements.

Technical Interviews

Technical interviews are common in industries such as finance, accounting, technology, engineering, and science. Candidates may be asked about academic coursework, industry-specific knowledge (e.g., market indices), or technical skills (e.g., programming proficiency). These interviews assess a candidate’s problem-solving abilities and expertise in their field.

Virtual Interviews

Many employers leverage video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams to conduct interviews, particularly when candidates are applying from different locations. Virtual interviews offer the benefits of face-to-face interaction without the logistical challenges of an in-person meeting. To ensure a successful virtual interview, candidates should plan ahead and present themselves professionally.

Technology and Location Considerations

To prepare for a virtual interview:

- Ensure a **strong internet connection** by testing your Wi-Fi signal in advance.
- If using a **laptop or tablet**, check the battery level beforehand and keep the device plugged in or have a charger readily available.
- Select a **quiet, professional setting** with a neutral background to minimize distractions.

Mock Interviews

Mock interviews are designed to help you practice your interviewing skills in a realistic, professional setting. Conducted by experienced Career Development staff, these sessions provide valuable, constructive feedback on your performance, highlighting your strengths and offering suggestions for improvement. Mock interviews are ideal preparation for internship and job interviews, as well as for admissions interviews to professional programs or graduate schools. This practice enables you to refine your responses, improve your confidence, and enhance your overall presentation, increasing your chances of success in future interviews.

To schedule a virtual mock interview with Career Service:

1. Login to College Central Network
2. Click on “Appointments”
3. Select “Schedule a New Appointment”
4. Select your preferred date and time
5. Click “schedule”

Big Interview

Big Interview is an online interactive platform designed to help users prepare for interviews. It offers mock interviews tailored to specific industries, jobs, and experience levels, making it an effective way to gain confidence and prepare thoroughly. The program includes a comprehensive video curriculum that guides users through each stage of the interview process, from learning the basics to mastering interview closures.

Users can select from various interview scenarios, practice general, behavioral, and technical questions, and save practice sessions for future review and feedback. Interactive tools help users improve delivery, conquer nerves, and receive constructive feedback. Big Interview also offers over 1,100 industry-specific sample answers and questions, providing a well-rounded preparation experience. <https://www.biginterview.com/>

Company Research

To stand out in an interview, it's crucial to demonstrate a solid understanding of the company, its mission, and its industry. Thorough research allows you to connect your skills and experience to the role and company more effectively. **Key areas to focus on include:**

- The company's mission, vision, and values.
- Its operations, including location(s), size, and workforce.
- What products or services the company provides, and their market positioning.
- Key customers and competitors.
- Company structure, culture, and recent achievements or news.
- Whether the company is family-owned, publicly traded, nonprofit, or government.

Use resources like the company website, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and industry publications to gather this information.

Common Interview Questions

Though you can't predict every question, expect a mix of behavioral, resume-based, and situational questions. Prepare to answer with specific examples from your experience. Common questions include:

- Why are you interested in this company or industry?
- What work experience has been most valuable to you?
- How has your education prepared you for this role?
- Tell me about a time you faced a challenge and how you overcame it.
- How do you handle pressure or conflict in the workplace?

Being prepared for these questions helps you showcase your qualifications and readiness for the role.

THE STAR TECHNIQUE

The **STAR technique** offers an effective and structured approach to answering behavioral interview questions. It allows you to provide clear, focused responses by drawing on specific examples that demonstrate your qualifications for the position.

Begin by reviewing the job description to identify key skills and qualities the employer is seeking. Then, reflect on your experiences—whether from coursework, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, or previous jobs/internships—to select relevant examples that highlight your abilities. This approach adds credibility to your answers and helps showcase your preparedness for the role.

S = Situation

Describe the context of the situation.

T = Task

Describe the task and your specific role.

A = Action

Describe the actions you took.

R = Result

Describe the outcomes of your action.

NACE Career Competencies Icons

These icons represent eight career competencies. Utilize the STAR method to tell a story about your development in each one of the eight competencies.



Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Making the Most of Your Interview

At the end of an interview, you will typically have the opportunity to ask questions. Thoughtful inquiries not only demonstrate your interest but also help you assess whether the role and organization align with your career goals. Focus your questions on the industry, the company, and the position to gain valuable insights.

Key Interview Strategies

A successful interview requires preparation, professionalism, and effective communication. From arriving on time to following up afterward, these strategies will help you navigate the process confidently.

Industry-Related Questions

- How has this organization distinguished itself in terms of products/services compared to competitors in the industry?
- What challenges and opportunities do you foresee in the industry over the next few years?
- What trends or changes do you expect to impact this industry?

Organization-Specific Questions

- How does the company set strategic goals and measure success?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What career paths have past hires from my background typically followed?
- Does the organization support continuing education and professional development?
- How do you see my skills and work style fitting into the team culture?

Position-Specific Questions

- Can you describe the training program for this role? How is performance evaluated?
- What career trajectories have employees followed after starting in this position?
- What types of projects and responsibilities can I expect?
- What qualities define success in this role?
- How will my performance be measured?
- What are the key challenges associated with this role?
- What are the primary goals and expected outcomes for this position?

Interview Preparation & Etiquette

- Arrive 5-10 minutes early and plan your route in advance. Keep the office contact information handy.
- Turn off your phone completely.
- Bring necessary materials, including extra resumes, a notepad, and any required portfolios.
- Establish rapport with the interviewer by offering a firm handshake, maintaining eye contact, and engaging confidently.
- If faced with a challenging question, take a moment to collect your thoughts. Asking for clarification can also be beneficial.
- Conclude by reiterating your interest in the role and inquiring about next steps.
- Request a business card to send a follow-up thank-you note.
- Remember that every interaction with the company—whether at a networking event, an information session, or a casual meeting—contributes to their impression of you.

By approaching your interview with preparation and confidence, you can make a lasting impact and gather the information needed to make an informed career decision.

Interview Follow-Up

Send a thank-you note within 24 hours of your interview to each person you spoke with, expressing appreciation for their time and reiterating your interest in the position and organization. Personalize each message by referencing specific topics discussed during the interview.

Wait at least one week beyond the expected response date before following up. If you have not heard back by then, a brief, professional phone call to inquire about the hiring decision is appropriate.

Evaluating Job Offers

Making a Decision

When you receive a job offer, consider key factors before making a commitment. Ask yourself:

- Does this opportunity excite me? Does it align with my career goals?
- Do I have any concerns about the organization?
- How does the compensation and benefits package compare to industry standards and my expectations?

Key elements to evaluate include:

- Salary
- Health Benefits
- Vacation and Leave Policies
- Retirement Plans
- Location and Cost of Living
- Relocation Assistance
- Signing Bonus
- Additional Benefits (e.g., stock options, mentorship programs, professional development, transportation, start date flexibility)

Accepting an Offer

Once you decide to accept an offer, do so in writing, reaffirming your enthusiasm and summarizing key details of the agreement. Only accept an offer—whether verbally or in writing—if you fully intend to honor it.

Additionally, take the time to inform and thank those who supported your job search, including references, mentors, and networking contacts.

Declining an Offer

If you choose to decline an offer, a phone call is the most professional approach. However, a formal email or letter is also appropriate to maintain positive relationships.

- Notify the employer as soon as you decide, especially if you have accepted another offer.
- Declining in a timely and professional manner ensures goodwill and preserves future opportunities.
- Express appreciation, acknowledge the opportunity, and convey that it was a difficult decision.

By handling job offers thoughtfully and professionally, you maintain a strong reputation while making the best choice for your career.

Interview Attire

Dressing appropriately for an interview conveys professionalism, respect, and confidence, helping you make a strong first impression. Your attire should reflect your understanding of workplace norms and demonstrate your seriousness about the role.

For individuals who prefer gender-neutral or nontraditional attire, the key is to choose professional, well-fitted clothing that makes you feel comfortable and confident. Opt for classic, neutral styles that are clean, pressed, and appropriate for the industry. Avoid overly casual or distracting outfits, ensuring your appearance aligns with a polished, professional image.

Even if a second interview suggests a more relaxed dress code, err on the side of professionalism. It is always better to be slightly overdressed than too casual. A well-groomed and put-together look not only shows respect for the interviewer and the company but also reinforces your credibility as a candidate.

General Guidelines for Professional Attire

For Women:

- Wear a well-fitted dark suit (skirt or pants) with a conservative blouse.
- Opt for neutral colors and avoid bright prints, sheer fabrics, or overly trendy styles.
- Keep accessories, jewelry, makeup, and nail polish understated.
- Choose closed-toe, low-heeled shoes in good condition.
- If wearing hosiery, ensure it matches your skin tone and is free of snags.
- Maintain neat, professional hair and use minimal fragrance.
- Ensure all clothing is clean, pressed, and properly fitted.

For Men:

- Wear a dark, well-tailored suit with a coordinating dress shirt and conservative tie.
- Avoid bold colors and flashy patterns.
- Keep clothing clean, pressed, and comfortable.
- Maintain neat hair, fresh breath, and avoid strong cologne or aftershave.
- Wear polished dress shoes that match your belt.
- If applicable, keep facial hair well-groomed.

By dressing professionally, you demonstrate respect for yourself, the interviewer, and the organization. While daily office attire may be more casual, a polished look during an interview reinforces your credibility and readiness for the role.

BUILDING EXPERIENCES

Community Engagement

Participating in community activities, student organizations, volunteer work, on-campus employment, and internships is essential for both personal and professional growth. At OCtech, these experiences are intentionally structured to complement your education while equipping you with the eight NACE competencies—critical skills necessary for career readiness and long-term success in the workforce.

Student Employment

- Consult with Financial Aid to determine your eligibility for work-study before applying.
- Many student employment positions can also count as internship experience.

Professional Associations

- Reach out to your advisor or career development office for information on associations related to your field or interests.

Volunteer Work

- Stand out to employers by demonstrating community engagement and a commitment to service.
- Take on leadership roles to develop valuable skills and expand your professional network.

Study Abroad

- Gain global experience, immerse yourself in new cultures, and broaden your perspective.

Internships: A Path to Professional Growth

Internships provide students with the opportunity to gain real-world experience while earning academic credit. They help individuals assess whether a career path aligns with their goals and provide networking opportunities that may lead to job offers. Even if an internship does not result in immediate employment, it offers valuable professional training beyond the classroom.

Benefits of an Internship

Gain Industry Experience

- Apply classroom knowledge in a professional setting.
- Engage in industry-specific tasks such as administrative work, event planning, project development, research, data analysis, and report preparation.

Explore Career Paths

- Experience different industries firsthand to determine if a career aligns with your interests, goals, and financial expectations.
- Gain insight into long-term responsibilities that may not be apparent from coursework alone.

Develop Essential Skills

- Enhance industry-specific expertise in a low-risk learning environment.
- Strengthen soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, to thrive in a professional setting.

Increase Employment Opportunities

- Internships serve as extended job interviews, allowing students to showcase their capabilities.
- Establish a strong professional network within an organization, increasing the chances of securing a full-time position.

Paid vs. Unpaid Internships

Paid Internships

- Provide financial compensation for work performed, offering both income and professional experience.

- Often more competitive and can lead to higher motivation and increased job responsibility.

Unpaid Internships

- Offer valuable industry exposure but do not provide financial compensation.
- While unpaid, these internships still contribute to skill development and career advancement.

Internships for Academic Credit

- At OCtech, students can earn academic credit while gaining hands-on professional experience.
- Completing an internship for credit enhances both your resume and degree progress.
- Speak with your academic department to understand the requirements for your program.

By participating in an internship, students gain practical experience, build industry connections, and enhance their career prospects, making it a crucial step in professional development.

NACE Competencies

The NACE Competencies are a set of eight career readiness competencies developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). These competencies define the essential skills and qualities that prepare college students for successful transitions into the workforce.

The Eight NACE Competencies for Career Readiness

→ Career & Self-Development

- ◆ Proactively develop personal and professional growth.
- ◆ Seek opportunities for learning and career advancement.
- ◆ Show self-awareness and adaptability in various work settings.

→ Communication

- ◆ Clearly and effectively convey ideas, both verbally and in writing.
- ◆ Engage in active listening and adjust communication styles as needed.
- ◆ Demonstrate professionalism in digital and in-person interactions.

→ Critical Thinking

- ◆ Analyze issues, make informed decisions, and solve problems effectively.
- ◆ Use sound reasoning and data interpretation in decision-making.
- ◆ Think creatively to develop innovative solutions.

→ Equity & Inclusion

- ◆ Demonstrate an awareness of and respect for diverse perspectives.
- ◆ Advocate for inclusive practices in the workplace.
- ◆ Engage in continuous learning about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

→ Leadership

- ◆ Motivate and inspire others while fostering a positive work environment.
- ◆ Take responsibility for achieving goals and driving results.
- ◆ Encourage collaboration and ethical decision-making.

→ Professionalism

- ◆ Demonstrate accountability, integrity, and ethical behavior.
- ◆ Show reliability through punctuality, responsibility, and attention to detail.
- ◆ Maintain a professional demeanor in various workplace settings.

→ Teamwork

- ◆ Build strong interpersonal relationships and work effectively with diverse teams.

- ◆ Contribute to group efforts and resolve conflicts constructively.
- ◆ Show flexibility and respect for different working styles.

→ Technology

- ◆ Adapt to emerging technologies relevant to your industry.
- ◆ Use digital tools efficiently for professional tasks and problem-solving.
- ◆ Maintain cybersecurity awareness and digital professionalism.

Why Are NACE Competencies Important?

Employers seek candidates who demonstrate these competencies, as they ensure workplace readiness and increase employability. Developing these skills through internships, coursework, student organizations, and professional experiences helps students stand out in the job market. *Take the following self-assessment to see what competencies you need to develop and practice to be career ready.*

Competency and Definitions		Self Rating (1 - 5)	<i>Development Strategies</i> <i>List specific actions to take to improve in each competency.</i>
Career & Self-Development	Proactively develop oneself through continuous learning, self-awareness, career navigation, and networking.		
Communication	Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.		
Critical Thinking	Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.		
Equity & Inclusion	Demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitude to engage inclusively with diverse cultures and actively challenge racism.		
Leadership	Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.		
Professionalism	Understand and demonstrate effective work habits while acting in the interest of the community and workplace.		
Teamwork	Build collaborative relationships to achieve common goals, valuing diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.		
Technology	Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.		

SEARCH STRATEGIES

This section of the handbook provides essential strategies to enhance your job search. Gain insights into effective techniques for identifying opportunities, navigating career fairs, researching potential employers, crafting compelling elevator pitches, building a strong professional network, and maintaining proper etiquette throughout your career journey.

Strategies 1:

→ Leverage Career Coaching

- ◆ Utilize the support and guidance of your career coach to refine your job search strategy.

→ Job Search Platforms

- ◆ Explore opportunities through College Central Network, Google, and Indeed, which aggregate job postings from a wide variety of sources.
- ◆ Take advantage of advanced search functions to narrow down your job search.

→ LinkedIn

- ◆ Use LinkedIn to build and strengthen connections with industry professionals, recruiters, and OCity alumni.
- ◆ Reach out directly to recruiters to introduce yourself and express interest in opportunities.

→ Staffing Firms and Agencies

- ◆ Staffing agencies work quickly to meet client needs, often offering temporary, contract, temp-to-hire, or direct hire positions.
- ◆ Consider staffing agencies as a resource for both immediate and long-term employment opportunities.

Strategies Two:

→ Utilize Multiple Job Platforms

- ◆ Apply across several job boards (e.g., LinkedIn, College Central Network, Google, company career pages) to maximize your exposure.
- ◆ Explore additional resources, such as: [College Central Network](#).

→ Avoid Search Fatigue

- ◆ Dedicate 2-4 short sessions per week to job applications rather than spending long hours once a month.

- ◆ This consistent effort can help maintain momentum without burnout.

→ Optimize Your Time

- ◆ Filter job listings by date posted or most recent to ensure you apply to the newest openings and avoid expired listings.

→ Increase Application Volume

- ◆ Aim to apply to 5-8 positions each week to maximize your chances of securing an interview and ultimately, a job.
- ◆ The more positions you apply to, the greater your opportunities for success.

Key Job Search Tips

→ Customize Resumes and Cover Letters

- ◆ Tailor your application materials to match the job description.

→ Track Your Search

- ◆ Keep a record of positions and companies you've applied to, saving job descriptions for reference.
- ◆ Track useful search terms and filters, and maintain a list of target companies with login details for various application portals.

→ Follow Up

- ◆ If you haven't received updates, send a respectful follow-up to express your continued interest.
- ◆ Use email, phone, LinkedIn, or Handshake direct messaging to reconnect with recruiters or employers.

→ Get Offline

- ◆ Networking in person can be just as valuable as online applications. Attend career fairs and networking events to expand your professional connections

LinkedIn and Online Presence

How You Are Perceived

Your image is represented across various platforms such as social media, College Central Network, in the classroom, at work, and in public. Consider the following to manage and improve your professional image:

→ **Professionalism**

- ◆ Are you demonstrating professionalism across all platforms?
- ◆ Are you engaging with industry groups, earning certifications, and showcasing leadership?

→ **Community and Professional Engagement**

- ◆ Are you actively participating in professional or community events, volunteering, or contributing to meaningful causes?
-

Profile Basics Checklist

Words of Advice:

- **Google Yourself:** Review your online presence. Are you comfortable with what potential employers might see?
 - **Privacy Settings:** Ensure your social media accounts are set to private, limiting access to unapproved individuals.
-

LinkedIn and Online Presence

- **Profile Picture:** Use a professional headshot to create a positive first impression.
- **Headline:** Craft a compelling headline with relevant keywords to enhance searchability.
- **Edit URL:** Customize your LinkedIn URL to include your name, improving visibility.
- **Education:** Include all educational details, even high school, to expand your networking opportunities.
- **Experience:** List all previous companies and job titles to give recruiters a clear view of your professional background.
- **Skills:** Highlight relevant skills you want to market to potential employers.
- **Recommendations:** Request recommendations from connections to validate your professional experience and strengthen your credibility.

Career Fair and Event Preparation

Attending career fairs and professional events can be a valuable way to network, explore job opportunities, and make a positive impression on potential employers. To ensure you make the most of these events, follow these preparation tips:

Before the Event

→ Research Participating Employers

- ◆ Review the list of employers attending the event and identify those you are most interested in.
- ◆ Research each organization, their values, job openings, and company culture to tailor your approach.

→ Update Your Resume

- ◆ Ensure your resume is current, well-organized, and highlights your skills and experience relevant to the positions you are targeting.
Print multiple copies of your resume to distribute at the event.

→ Prepare Your Elevator Pitch

- ◆ Craft a brief (30-60 seconds) introduction that highlights who you are, what you are looking for, and why you're interested in the company.
- ◆ Practice your pitch to ensure it's concise, confident, and engaging.

→ Dress Professionally

- ◆ Dress in business professional attire that aligns with the industry you are targeting. Make a positive first impression with your appearance.

During the Event

→ Network Actively

- ◆ Visit the booths of your target employers and introduce yourself with a firm handshake and confident demeanor.
- ◆ Be prepared to discuss your background, skills, and interests.

→ Engage with Recruiters

- ◆ Ask insightful questions about the company, its culture, and available opportunities.

- ◆ Take note of key points discussed during each interaction to follow up later.

→ **Collect Contact Information**

- ◆ Obtain business cards or contact information from recruiters for future communication.
Take notes on each company or position that interests you for reference after the event.

→ **Be Open to Exploring New Opportunities**

- ◆ Even if you haven't considered a specific employer or industry, be open to learning more. You might discover opportunities you hadn't considered before.

After the Event

→ **Follow Up**

- ◆ Send personalized thank-you emails or LinkedIn messages to the recruiters you met, reiterating your interest in the organization and thanking them for their time.
- ◆ Reference something specific from your conversation to make your message stand out.

→ **Apply for Opportunities**

- ◆ Apply for positions you discussed at the event, using the knowledge you gained from your research and conversations.

→ **Track Your Interactions**

- ◆ Maintain a record of the employers you spoke with, positions you're interested in, and any follow-up actions needed.
 -

By following these steps, you can maximize the value of attending career fairs and professional events, making connections that may lead to future career opportunities.

Employer Research

Why You Should Research Employers

Conducting thorough research on a prospective employer is essential to leave a lasting impact at career fairs or interviews. By understanding the organization's mission, goals, and culture, you can align your skills and expertise with the company's needs. Employer research also allows you to tailor your resume and cover letter to demonstrate how your background can contribute to the organization's success.

Benefits of Employer Research

- Align your skills and experience with the company's needs.
 - Understand the organization's culture to ensure compatibility.
 - Strengthen your job search strategy and improve interview outcomes.
 - Tailor your resume and cover letter to better reflect the employer's priorities.
-

Where to Find Information About Employers

Gather information using a variety of resources:

- **Company Websites**
 - ◆ Review the company's mission, vision, history, and services.
- **Search Engines**
 - ◆ Use search engines to find articles, news, and updates about the company.
- **Social Media**
 - ◆ Follow the company on platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter to stay updated.
- **Credible News Outlets**
 - ◆ Cross-check information from credible sources to ensure accuracy.

Job and Internship Checklist

Step 1: Know Yourself

- ☐ I have identified my strengths, skills, interests, and experiences.
- ☐ I can name two or three careers/jobs I would like to pursue.
- ☐ I have made a list of possible job titles/fields of interest.

Step 2: Know Where You Want To Work

- ☐ I have researched potential career fields: typical entry-level jobs, typical salaries, the best location for jobs, etc (O*Net OnLine, Occupational Outlook Handbook).
- ☐ I have identified the top three geographic areas where I'd like to live and work.
- ☐ I have researched organizations or companies that might hire someone with my skills, interests, and background (online, informational interviewing, Career Development Office, volunteering, interning)

Step 3: Get Ready for the Search

- ☐ I have updated my profile in College Central Network.
- ☐ I have had my resume and cover letter reviewed by Career Services.
- ☐ I have prepared a portfolio or work samples to highlight my experience, skills, and talent.
- ☐ I have developed my "30-second speech" for brief interactions with employers.
- ☐ I have created and updated my LinkedIn profile (with a professional headshot).
- ☐ I have identified and requested three individuals who will serve as professional references.
- ☐ I have identified 3-5 people from various platforms (faculty/staff connections, current or former supervisors, former coaches and teachers, community leaders, etc.) who may be willing to introduce me to others in their network.
- ☐ I have prepared for interviews by practicing my responses to typical questions and/or doing a mock interview. (Big interview, Career Services staff)
- ☐ I have an interview suit/professional attire that is appropriate for my chosen discipline.
- ☐ I have a professional voicemail message and email address for professional communication.

Step 4: Start Searching

- ☐ I have uploaded my resume(s) to College Central Network and selected my job search preferences.
- ☐ I regularly check College Central Network for job postings and career information.
- ☐ I have a system for keeping track of my contacts, interviews, and other job-search activities.
- ☐ I am active on LinkedIn and have identified common connections or alumni at companies of interest.
- ☐ I follow up on every interesting job lead immediately.
- ☐ I have developed a list of potential networking contacts and stay in regular contact by updating them on my search and/or sending them seasonal greetings.
- ☐ I follow up each cover letter with a phone call or e-mail to the employer requesting a job interview.
- ☐ I sent prompt thank you email messages (within 24- 48 hours) to every person who interviewed me.

Conducting an Ethical Job Search

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) outlines ethical principles for job seekers:

1. Provide accurate information about your academic background and work.
2. Conduct your job search with honesty, avoiding misrepresentation on resumes or during interviews.
3. Only interview with employers you're genuinely interested in to avoid misleading them.
4. Adhere to schedules and notify employers promptly if you can't attend an interview.
5. Communicate your acceptance or refusal of job offers as soon as possible.
6. Accept job offers in good faith and honor your commitments.
7. Withdraw from recruiting once your job search is complete.
8. Ensure you are fairly reimbursed for recruitment expenses and gather all necessary information to make informed decisions.

Elevator Pitch

A key component of successful interviewing and networking is making a strong first impression. A prime opportunity to achieve this is when you're asked, "Tell me about yourself." Your response serves as a personal "commercial," offering a succinct overview of your experience, skills, strengths, accomplishments, and goals—all in about 30 seconds. To craft a compelling introduction, include:

- **(A)** Who you are
- **(B)** Your experience, strengths, and abilities
- **(C)** What you are seeking

Elevator Pitch Example:

(A) Hi, I'm Sarah OCtech, a senior majoring in early care and education.

(B) I have gained valuable experience through my involvement in organizing campus events on the Event Planning Committee and contributing to the Campus Educator Group. These roles have sharpened my skills in event coordination and strategic planning.

(C) I'm seeking a career in early care and education, and this position aligns perfectly with my skills and professional aspirations.

Networking

Networking is a vital tool for career development, as each person you know can introduce you to a wide network of contacts. The average person is connected to approximately 600 individuals, so leveraging these connections can open numerous opportunities. To enhance your networking efforts, focus on your interests and research companies or individuals aligned with your goals. Engage thoughtfully, listen actively, and maintain open body language.

Tips for Effective Networking:

- **Prepare Thoughtful Questions:** Research individuals you'll meet and develop questions that demonstrate genuine interest.
- **Maintain Open Body Language:** Stand tall, make eye contact, use hand gestures, and avoid crossing your arms.
- **Follow Up:** Exchange business cards or connect on LinkedIn to continue the conversation.

How to Brainstorm People in Your Network:

- **Identify Key Contacts:** Start with friends, family, classmates, and colleagues who might have valuable connections.
- **Research Relevant Connections:** Look for professionals in your field, alumni from your school, and industry leaders.
- **Map Out Extended Connections:** Consider who your contacts know and how those connections can be beneficial.
- **Use LinkedIn:** Explore profiles and groups related to your interests to identify potential new contacts.

Professional Etiquette

Professional etiquette refers to the behaviors and actions that help build respect and trust in a workplace or networking environment. Maintaining a professional demeanor is key to building strong relationships and enhancing your career growth. Here are essential aspects of professional etiquette:

Communication Etiquette:

- **Be Clear and Concise:** Avoid jargon or overly complex language. Speak clearly and to the point.
- **Respond Promptly:** Reply to emails, calls, or messages within a reasonable timeframe (typically 24 hours).
- **Practice Active Listening:** Pay attention when others are speaking, show interest, and ask follow-up questions.
- **Use Proper Language:** Maintain professionalism in both written and verbal communication, avoiding slang or inappropriate language.

Workplace Etiquette:

- **Be Punctual:** Arrive on time for meetings, appointments, and work shifts. It shows respect for others' time.
- **Dress Appropriately:** Follow the company dress code or err on the side of dressing slightly more formal for work and interviews.
- **Maintain a Clean Workspace:** A tidy desk and organized work area reflect professionalism.
- **Respect Personal Space:** Avoid interrupting others or invading their workspace without permission.

Networking Etiquette:

- **Introduce Yourself Clearly:** Use a firm handshake, make eye contact, and introduce yourself with confidence.
- **Be Respectful of Others' Time:** Keep meetings or conversations brief and to the point unless the other person indicates more time is desired.
- **Follow Up:** After networking events, send a brief thank-you email or message to express appreciation for the conversation and maintain the connection.

Meeting Etiquette:

- **Prepare in Advance:** Know the agenda, your role, and any materials you need for the meeting.
- **Stay Engaged:** Pay attention, participate actively, and avoid distractions such as checking your phone.
- **Be Respectful of Others:** Let others speak without interrupting, and respect differing opinions.

Dining Etiquette:

- **Follow Basic Table Manners:** Chew with your mouth closed, keep elbows off the table, and avoid interrupting others during meals.
- **Know When to Speak:** Wait until others are finished talking before starting your meal or making a comment.
- **Order Politely:** When dining with others, choose menu items that are easy to eat and avoid overly messy foods.

Application Materials:

Resume Checklist

A resume is a formal document that provides a concise summary of your professional experience and educational background. Review the checklist below to ensure your resume adheres to established standards and guidelines.

FORMATTING

- ☐ Keep resume to one page in length.
- ☐ Make sure your information fills the page without looking crowded.
- ☐ Emphasize major headings using capital letters, underlining or bold.
- ☐ Use Bullets, Bold, Italics, Underlining and Indenting appropriately.
- ☐ Proofread your resume to make sure it is free of grammatical errors.
- ☐ Keep spacing and formatting consistent throughout document.
- ☐ List dates consistently throughout the resume.
- ☐ Use only appropriate fonts (Times, Arial Narrow, Verdana, Garamond, Goudy, Georgia, etc.)
- ☐ Keep font sizes 10, 11, or 12 pt. for text and 12, 14, or 16 pt. for headings and name.
- ☐ Do NOT include pictures and/or graphics.
- ☐ Do NOT include personal Information (Age, Weight, Children, etc.).
- ☐ Set margins to approximately 1 inch on all sides.

NAME/ADDRESS

- ☐ Put your full name on the top line of the resume.
- ☐ Include complete mailing address.
- ☐ Include telephone number with area code (be sure it is a number where you can be reached).
- ☐ Make sure your email address is professional (U of M email address is recommended).

PROFILE

- ☐ Objectives are omitted except in the fields of nursing and education.
- Use a profile to summarize key accomplishments relevant to the job (recommended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students).
- ☐ Highlight key skills or qualifications relevant to the job.
 - ☐ Do NOT use personal pronouns such as "I, me, or my."

EDUCATION

- ☐ Write the full name of your degree and major, using no abbreviations.
- ☐ List the name of the institution that granted the degree, along with the city and state.
- ☐ Include the month and year of graduation or expected graduation.
- ☐ Do NOT list dates of attendance.
- ☐ Include GPA if it is 3.0 or higher.
- ☐ List the highest degree first.

Resume Checklist continues to the next page.

HONORS

- ☐ List only honors earned after High School.
- ☐ List any Scholarships, Assistantships, Grants, Honor Societies, Deans Lists, and Awards.

SKILLS

- ☐ List any relevant technical skills.
- ☐ Reflect skill level accurately (proficient, working knowledge, etc.).
- ☐ Include language skills that are accurately reflected (fluent, conversant, etc.).
- ☐ Do NOT include vague generalities (such as “strong communication skills”).
- ☐ Leave off any outdated or obsolete skills (such as FORTRAN).

RELEVANT COURSES

- ☐ Only include courses relevant to the job you are applying for.
- ☐ Write full course names; do NOT use course numbers.
- ☐ Nursing students are required to include this section. Include “/Practicum” after any course title that has a practicum associated with it. For example: Adult Health Care Nursing/Practicum.

EXPERIENCE

- ☐ Include Internship/Co-Op Experience, relevant paid work, and relevant volunteer work.
- ☐ Include the position title, company name, city, state, and dates of employment.
- ☐ Begin each job description with an action verb.
- ☐ Focus descriptions on accomplishments.
- ☐ Quantify and qualify descriptions when possible (ex. Increased sales by 30%).
- ☐ Use bullet points and action verbs when describing experience.

LEADERSHIP & ACTIVITIES

- ☐ List campus and community activities as you would a job or internship.
- ☐ Highlight leadership positions and describe accomplishments using bulleted points.
- ☐ Include Title, Organization, Location, and Dates of Participation.
- ☐ Generally, do NOT include organization names that reveal political affiliation, religious preference, racial/ethnic background, etc.
- ☐ Do NOT include High School activities.

ADDITIONAL CATEGORIES

- ☐ Use additional categories if relevant to the individual and the job being sought.
- ☐ Examples of additional categories include but are not limited to: Research, Publications, Professional Associations, Certifications, Licenses, Military Service, and Presentations.

REFERENCES

- ☐ Do NOT include names and contact information for references on resume; list on a separate page. Do NOT include the statement available upon request.

Action Verbs

Effectively showcasing your accomplishments and their impact is key to mastering resume writing. **Begin with an action verb to clearly convey your role in the achievement. Next, provide context by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative details.** Finally, highlight the end result of your actions to demonstrate the value of your contributions.

Analytical/ Research Skills: Analyzed Evaluated Investigated Interpreted	Communication/ People Skills: Facilitated Negotiated Presented Collaborated	Management/ Leadership/ Decision Making Skills: Directed Coordinated Supervised Optimized	Technical Skills: Programmed Engineered Operated Troubleshoot
Artistic/Creative/ Innovative Skills: Designed Created Conceptualized Developed	Helping/ Counseling/ Mediating Skills: Supported Advised Guided Mediated	Selling/Convincing Skills: Persuaded Negotiated Promoted Influenced	Health/Science/ Medical Skills: Diagnosed Administered Assessed Monitored

Resume

A **resume** is a concise document that summarizes your skills, experience, education, and achievements to present to potential employers. It serves as an introduction to your qualifications and suitability for a job.

Components of a Resume:

→ **Header:**

- ◆ Name, phone number, email, LinkedIn, and address (optional)

→ **Objective/Summary:**

- ◆ A brief statement about your career goals and why you're applying for the position.

→ **Education:**

- ◆ Degree(s), school(s), graduation date(s), relevant coursework, and academic achievements.

→ **Work Experience:**

- ◆ Job titles, company names, dates, key responsibilities, and achievements.

→ **Skills:**

- ◆ Relevant hard and soft skills (e.g., communication, technical abilities, certifications).

→ **Certifications and Training:**

- ◆ Additional qualifications such as certifications, licenses, or specialized training.

→ **Volunteer Work/Extracurricular Activities:**

- ◆ Volunteer experiences or activities that showcase relevant skills.

→ **Achievements and Awards:**

- ◆ Recognition or honors you've received that relate to your qualifications.

→ **References:**

- ◆ Available upon request or listed if desired.

Each section highlights different aspects of your professional life to give employers a comprehensive understanding of your qualifications.

This example is meant as a guide - not a template - for new resume writers.

Sarah OCtech

Phone: (123) 456-7890 | Email: sarah.octech@email.com
LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/sarahoctech | Location: [City, State]

Objective

Motivated Early Care and Education student with a passion for fostering the growth and development of young children. Seeking a position where I can apply my knowledge of child development, classroom management, and educational support to help create a positive and nurturing environment for children.

Education

Associate's Degree in Early Care and Education

Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College – Orangeburg, SC

Expected Graduation: May 20, 20__

Relevant Coursework: Child Development, Early Childhood Curriculum, Classroom Management

Work Experience

Childcare Assistant

Sunshine Daycare – [City, State]

June 20, 20__ – Present

- Assisted lead teachers in planning and implementing age-appropriate learning activities.
- Ensured the safety and well-being of children during playtime, meals, and nap time.
- Provided support to children with special needs in the classroom.

Summer Camp Counselor

Happy Kids Summer Camp – [City, State]

June 20, 20__ – August 20, 20__

- Led group activities for children ages 4-6, including arts, crafts, and games.
- Maintained a safe and organized environment during all camp activities.
- Communicated regularly with parents about the children's progress and daily activities.

Continue to the next page.

Skills

- Child development knowledge
- Classroom management techniques
- Strong communication and teamwork skills
- First Aid/CPR certified (valid until [Year])
- Proficient in Microsoft Office and educational software

Certifications

- CPR and First Aid Certification – Red Cross, [Year]
- [Other relevant certifications, if applicable]

Volunteer Experience

Volunteer Teacher Assistant

Little Learners Preschool – [City, State]

September 20, 20__ – December 20, 20__

- Supported teachers with classroom activities and supervised children during recess.
- Assisted with the creation of learning materials for language and math activities.

References

Available upon request.

Cover Letter

A cover letter is a document that accompanies your resume when applying for a job. It introduces you to the hiring manager, highlights your qualifications, and explains why you're a strong candidate for the position.

The cover letter provides an opportunity to personalize your application and demonstrate your enthusiasm for the role.

Components of a Cover Letter:

→ **Header:**

Include your contact information, the date, and the employer's contact details.

→ **Greeting/Salutation:**

Address the letter to the hiring manager (use "Dear Hiring Manager" if you don't know their name).

→ **Introduction:**

Introduce yourself and mention the job you're applying for.

→ **Body Paragraph(s):**

Explain why you're interested in the position, your relevant skills, and your experience.

→ **Conclusion:**

Reiterate your interest, express gratitude, and indicate your desire for an interview.

→ **Closing:**

End with a professional closing (e.g., "Sincerely," "Best regards") and your name.

This example is meant as a guide - not a template - for new cover letter writers.

Cover Letter Example:

Sarah OCtech

Phone: (123) 456-7890 | Email: sarah.octech@email.com

[Date]

Hiring Manager

Sunshine Daycare

[City, State]

Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing to express my interest in the Childcare Assistant position at Sunshine Daycare, as advertised on your website. With an Associate's Degree in Early Care and Education and hands-on experience in childcare settings, I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to your team and support the growth and development of the children in your care.

During my internship at Little Learners Preschool and my current position at Sunshine Daycare, I have developed strong skills in lesson planning, classroom management, and child development. I am particularly passionate about creating nurturing environments where children can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically. In my current role, I assist lead teachers in providing individualized support to children, ensuring that each child's needs are met, and fostering a positive learning atmosphere.

I am confident that my background in early childhood education, along with my commitment to providing exceptional care and support, make me a strong fit for this position. I would love the opportunity to contribute to your mission of creating a safe and engaging environment for children. I look forward to the possibility of discussing how my skills and experiences align with your needs further.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications in more detail. Please feel free to contact me at (123) 456-7890 or via email at sarah.octech@email.com to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

Sarah OCtech

References

References are individuals who can vouch for your skills, qualifications, and character to potential employers. These people are typically former managers, colleagues, professors, or mentors who can provide insight into your work ethic, achievements, and overall fit for the job you're applying for.

Good Tips for Asking for a Reference:

- **Choose the right people:** Select individuals who know your work well and can speak to your strengths. It could be a former boss, colleague, or someone who has directly observed your skills and accomplishments.
- **Ask in advance:** Reach out to potential references well before you need them to ensure they're willing and prepared to provide a positive recommendation.
Provide context: When asking for a reference, explain why you're seeking the reference, what position you're applying for, and what skills or experiences you'd like them to highlight.
- **Be polite and respectful:** Always approach the request with gratitude, and acknowledge that the person is doing you a favor.

Example of Asking for a Reference:

Subject: Request for a Reference

Dear [Name],

I hope you're doing well! I am currently applying for a [position title] with [company name], and I was wondering if you would be willing to serve as a reference for me.

I greatly valued our time working together at [Company Name], and I believe your insight into my [specific skills or experiences] would be incredibly helpful in showcasing my qualifications. If you're comfortable with this, I'd be happy to provide any additional information regarding the position or what I'm aiming to highlight in the reference.

Thank you so much for considering this request! I truly appreciate your support.

Best regards,
[Your Name]

This approach is professional, polite, and provides the context the reference needs to give a thoughtful response.

CONTACT CAREER SERVICES:

Mrs. Sacajawea Salley-Howell, M.Ed.
Career Service Specialist
3250 Saint Matthews Rd, Orangeburg, SC 29118

803.535.1329

salley-howellst@octech.edu

www.octech.edu

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
Call or register online to make an appointment.