Maribel was really getting frustrated. It was the end of her senior year and she was supposed to start looking for a job. She thought that she would like to work in the restaurant business because she liked food, she liked people, and she liked the idea of working in the evening.

She presented this idea to her teacher.

“What experience do you have in the restaurant business?” her teacher asked.

“Well, I’ve eaten in a lot of them,” Maribel laughed.

The teacher didn’t laugh.

“Have you been a waitress? Helped in a kitchen? Cleaned off tables? Have you done any of these things?”

“Yes,” said Maribel, “in my own kitchen at home. I clear my own dishes after dinner and sometimes I load the dishwasher. I’ve helped my mom bake and my dad lets me cook stuff on the grill.”

“Well, that’s not really the kind of experience I’m talking about,” said her teacher. “It would really help if you had some restaurant experience.”

Maribel groaned. “I just want to have a chance to work in a restaurant to learn about it and see if I like it. But I can’t get experience without experience!”

How can Maribel get the experience she needs so that she can find out if she likes the restaurant business?
Gary doesn’t know who to listen to.

When he graduates from high school his parents want him to live at home and work part-time. They do not think that he is ready to handle full-time work. They don't think he can afford to live in an apartment with his two friends who are also going to go to work.

His guidance counselor wants him to get a job and go to the community college part-time. She keeps talking about how he should get a certificate in a skill where there are jobs, like technology or healthcare.

His friends are going to college or working full-time. They keep talking about how they are going to finally be on their own to do whatever they want. They want Gary to continue to hang out with them.

Gary knows that he may have some difficulties in getting and keeping a job. It’s not as easy for him to just jump right in to something new. He’s not even sure what he wants to do with the rest of his life.

Who should Gary listen to?
Mario finally got a great job and he’s really enjoying it. He is working at a dry cleaning store where he gets to wait on customers and package up the clean laundry. It doesn’t sound like much fun, but Mario really wants to get experience in working in a business. Some day he would like to open his own store, even if it’s not a dry cleaning store.

The manager understands that Mario has a disability that requires some adjustments to the work schedule and changes in some of the tasks. For example, Mario has trouble lifting anything heavy, so the manager makes sure that Mario never has to do that.

Mario also has difficult days when he is struggling with health problems, and the manager is very accommodating. Mario tries very hard to get to work on time and be there every day. He tries to make up any lost time if he can.

Mario knows that he’s lucky that his manager is so understanding. The problem is that the manager makes a big deal out of it and keeps telling the other employees that Mario has a disability and needs “special treatment.” The manager sometimes excuses Mario from doing tasks that Mario is perfectly capable of doing.

The other employees have been patient, but they are starting to get a little annoyed. They have problems of their own, and don’t appreciate all of the attention that Mario is getting from the manager.

Mario doesn’t want to ruin a good thing, but he doesn’t want to make his co-workers mad. What should Mario do?
When Julia graduates from high school in a couple of months she will be living in an apartment with three other women. She has already landed a job at a store that is right down the street from her apartment. She had worked there as an intern and they hired her full-time. She is thrilled, especially because she likes the people she will be working with.

Julia is very excited about this new life ahead of her, but she is concerned about some changes that are happening to her medically. Her doctors have agreed that she needs to be on a different medication that may take a few weeks to get used to.

When she starts her new job she will have been on the medication for 8 weeks, and she has no idea whether it will be effective or not. She’s also worried about possible reactions to the medication.

When Julia was an intern at the store, the manager was aware that Julia was part of a supported employment program arranged by the high school. But the manager really didn’t know the details of Julia’s life and didn’t ask. Since Julia was able to handle the job assignments, there was very little discussion about Julia’s health situation.

But now Julia feels like someone should know about her medication. She will not have a job coach. She has never talked openly with any of her co-workers about her healthcare needs. She’s worried that if the medication is not working or is causing her problems, someone should know what is going on.

But she really doesn't want people to treat her differently if they have this new information.

What should Julia do?
Jessica has been filling out job applications and has already had a phone call from an employer. She is scheduled for an interview for next week after school.

One of Jessica’s teachers has been helping her prepare for the interview. They have practiced a number of questions, including some difficult ones that may come up. Jessica is feeling pretty confident, but she has one concern.

If Jessica gets the job she will have to rely on her family members for the ride to work. The bus stop is a few blocks away from her house and she would have difficulty getting to work on time. Both her parents and her two older brothers work, and they have all told her that they will drive her to work. But she’s not completely confident that they will follow through.

She knows that her brother Jake will have to go out of his way to pick her up. Her brother Sam is always late for everything and doesn’t always go to work.

Her parents work different shifts, so sometimes one of them is sleeping in the morning and the other one is working when Jessica will have to leave for work.

The whole plan sounds pretty unreliable. Jessica is afraid that the employer will ask her in the interview about her transportation plans. She knows that employers are not allowed to ask her questions about transportation to work, but she might get asked anyway. And even if she’s not asked, she’s not quite sure how she is going to handle transportation to a new job.

How should Jessica handle this situation?
Alex wants to get a job when he graduates from high school. He doesn’t know exactly what type of job he would like, but he knows that he doesn’t want to go to any more classes. He wants to make some money of his own.

Alex had two internship experiences and they didn’t work out very well. He thought that the first internship was really boring so he didn’t always show up. He didn’t like being told what to do, especially when he didn’t like the work.

The second internship was at a clothing store and he enjoyed it, but he had trouble doing all of the tasks that were assigned to him. The manager was always giving him more work and Alex had trouble keeping up. It was frustrating so eventually Alex quit. The teacher who arranged the internship tried to work things out with Alex and the manager, but Alex didn’t really want to cooperate.

Alex just wants to get out on his own and pick out a job that he likes.

Now Alex’s mom is saying that she doesn’t think that he is ready to go to work. She thinks that he needs another year taking classes that will prepare him in a field that he would enjoy. She has been researching local colleges where he could take one or two classes. The local community college has a Work Study program that would allow him to get 10 hours of work experience a week on campus. She thinks this is the perfect solution.

Alex does not agree, but he doesn’t know how to convince his mother that he is ready to go to work full-time.

What do you think Alex should do?
Sarah has watched *American Idol* since it started. She always hears the contestants saying that they are “following their dream.”

She watches *Oprah* after school and hears Oprah and her guests talking about how they had to “follow their dream.”

Sarah’s dream is to be a fashion designer in New York City. She is always sketching clothing and advising her friends on what to wear. She enjoys going to the mall and studying the clothes that are for sale. She watches *Project Runway* and other shows that are all about fashion, and spends a lot of time studying fashion magazines at the local bookstore.

Sarah is convinced that if she just sticks with her dream she will become a rich and famous fashion designer.

But she’s not really sure how to follow her dream, and her teachers and family are not very supportive. Her Art teacher is not encouraging at all. Everyone keeps telling her about the difficulties of being a success in the fashion industry. They talk about how expensive it is in New York City, how 90% of the designers fail, and how stressful a life it is.

They point out that she has no experience in the field. In fact, she hasn’t had a job except for a job shadowing experience.

They don’t mention that Sarah has a disability that makes it hard for her to navigate busy streets and stairs. But Sarah thinks that they believe that it is her disability that is really going to get in the way of her achieving her dream. This has made her even more determined to go for it.

What should Sarah do?
Belinda and Carl have been dating for two years and want to stay together after high school. Belinda has been accepted at the community college to work towards her nursing degree. She has already taken two of the science courses required for the degree in a special program in the high school.

Carl wants to get a job right away, preferably as an audio technician at a radio or television station. He doesn’t have any work experience but has worked with audio equipment all his life. The Music Director of the school always relies on Carl to help him with the audio for the school concerts.

The problem is that there are limits on the number of jobs that Carl can apply for in his town. He is probably going to have to move to where he can get his first job. This is a huge step for Carl because he has had a number of supports in school, including regular Resource Room assistance. Now that he is in his senior year he has been able to get his schoolwork completed without as much help, but it’s been a struggle. His parents are very supportive of him living on his own, but they don’t want him too far away.

Belinda does not want to change her plans, especially because she already has credits at the community college. She needs to live at home to save money, but eventually plans on getting an apartment with Carl.

They don’t know what to do. What if Carl has to move away? Should Belinda try to find a college nearby? Is getting an apartment together a good idea?

Maybe Carl should work in his town at any job he can find, and wait until Belinda finishes her degree. Then Carl can look for a job as an audio technician in another town.

They want to be together but they have plans that might keep them apart.

What should they do?
For as long as he can remember, Jeremy wanted to learn how to weld. He used to watch the welders working on new construction in his neighborhood. He would hang around the auto shop where his dad worked and watched the welders fixing the cars. He always thought that it would be the coolest job.

Now that Jeremy is graduating from high school, he will be old enough to start working toward a welding certificate. There are two welding schools in his city and they both provide classes and experience for different types of welding. Jeremy wants to be certified in all types of welding so that he can work anywhere in the world.

With his teacher’s encouragement, he researched both schools on the internet and called up the Admissions offices for more information. He was concerned that they may discriminate against him because of his disability, but all of the literature looked like he was going to be qualified to get into both schools. At the Mercury Welding School they made a point of saying on the phone that they were an “equal opportunity” school and would be happy to talk to him about his plans. He liked the woman he spoke to and decided Mercury would be his choice.

When he found out the cost of the program he was shocked, but it did not dim his enthusiasm. He figured he could get some sort of scholarship or work part-time to cover the costs.

After talking to Mrs. Silver, the financial aid person at Mercury, he realized that there would not be any time for working. Scholarships were small and rare. He was going to have to pay for the entire program himself. Mrs. Silver gave him piles of information on student loans.

Jeremy discussed this with his father. “We can’t afford it, son. And I’m not willing to co-sign a loan because it’s too risky. You are going to have to work for awhile to earn the money to go to school or take out the loans in your own name.”

Jeremy is really discouraged. What should he do?
Barb has been volunteering and working when she has not been going to her high school classes or studying. Her parents have made it very clear that her disability will not get in the way of her being successful in life. They have worked closely with the school to arrange for experiences in job shadowing, internships, and work experiences. They are very excited about Barb’s upcoming graduation and have been asking her about her plans for the future.

Barb wants to continue working because she loves the independence and the money. She is hard-working and her employers have been very supportive.

But Barb does not want a dead-end job that she will be stuck in forever. There are some jobs that she would not be able to do physically, but she is willing to try out anything else that looks interesting. Then she’ll make up her mind about what she plans on doing for the future.

She’s decided that the best thing would be to work part-time and go to college part-time. She gathered a catalogue from a college in town, and talked to the counselors in the college Career Center about job opportunities. Everyone was very helpful and gave her lots of good ideas about what courses to take and what jobs to pursue.

When Barb put everything in front of her and analyzed it, she realized that she probably would not have any time to sleep, eat, or study. The courses were in the mornings and evenings or on-line. The jobs were on or near the campus, but mostly during the day. How was she going to manage all of this?

Barb knew that students were balancing work and school, but how did they do it?

What should Barb do to work out her plan?
REAL LIFE STORIES

A Tight Economy

Mario is very anxious to get a job when he leaves high school. He especially wants to work so that he can help out his family. His father just got laid off and his mother is worried about the future of her part-time job.

In fact, it seems like a lot of the parents of his friends are getting laid off and are having a hard time finding work. There just don’t seem to be that many jobs available these days.

Mario knew that everyone was talking about big changes in the economy, but he wasn’t really sure what that meant. He heard the term “recession” and knew that gas prices were going up and some big stores were going out of business, but he didn’t really understand how this would affect his job search. Now he is beginning to see that even the most qualified workers are losing their jobs and are having trouble finding work.

His school has Mario enrolled in a “Job Readiness” class so that he will be prepared to handle job applications and interviews. Some of the class activities are about how to be professional and successful on the job.

But how can he use these new skills if he can’t even get a job? Mario feels like the classes are not worth the time because he is not optimistic about future employment.

He’s decided that in the next class he’s going to bring up this problem. He thinks that he needs more information about how to find the jobs that are left, and how to get hired. He doesn’t think that he needs to learn how to be a good employee.

What advice would you give Mario?
Jamal is tired of the comments that are made about him when he’s working at his new job.

Jamal is finishing up high school and working after school three afternoons a week. He stocks the shelves in a local grocery store and helps customers carry groceries to their cars.

He likes the job because it’s not too difficult, he has a sense of accomplishment, and he enjoys being around the customers. He especially likes the paycheck that he gets every two weeks. It pays for downloading music on his iPod, movie tickets, bus fare, and other things that make his life more fun.

The customers are always nice to him and they appreciate it when he helps them out. It is the other people who work in the store who aren’t very nice. Most of his co-workers are pleasant and treat him with respect, but there are a few who are downright mean. They make sarcastic comments and imitate the way that Jamal talks. Sometimes he realizes that they are walking behind him to make fun of the way that he walks.

The other day a customer noticed that a worker at the store was teasing Jamal. She reported the worker to the manager and the worker got told to cut it out. Instead of stopping the behavior, the worker kept it up when the manager wasn’t looking.

Jamal has experienced this type of treatment in school, and he always tried hard to ignore it. He made his own friends who stuck by him when things got rough. A couple of times he had to tell a teacher when he felt unsafe, but once he reached high school he pretty much handled any teasing or bullying on his own. He did not hesitate to stand up for himself.

He’s not quite sure what to do in the work situation. If he stands up for himself he might look like he’s causing trouble. He can’t always ignore the behavior because it interferes with his ability to get his work done. If he tells the manager, the treatment may get worse.

His friends tell him that he should not put up with the way he’s being treated and the workers who are mean to him should be fired. They say that the manager wouldn’t want workers who can’t work well with everyone at the store.

What should Jamal do?
Olivia has been talking to her transition teacher about what she is going to do after high school. She has always wanted to work outdoors and wants a job that involves taking care of the environment. Olivia’s family has always done a lot of camping and swimming and even though Olivia sometimes struggled with the physical demands of outdoor activities, she worked hard to overcome any obstacles.

Olivia’s teacher is not so sure that outdoor work is a good idea for Olivia. The teacher worries about Olivia’s ability to carry out work tasks without assistance. The teacher has also consulted with the school nurse and other teachers and she is convinced that Olivia needs to think about some other type of work.

Olivia has talked to her parents about this dilemma and they agreed to come in to the school to have a conference with the teacher. They do not want to support Olivia if the teachers and school nurse seem to be concerned about Olivia’s job choice. They think that maybe the teachers may have a better understanding of the demands of an outdoors job.

Olivia thinks that she should be able to pursue any career that she wants. She has worked hard to overcome some of the difficulties related to her disability and she doesn’t want anything to get in her way. She doesn’t want to climb Mt. Everest (well, not now, anyway) but she does want to be able to clear trails, plant gardens, rescue wild birds, or anything that allows her to be outdoors.

She has asked if she can attend the parent conference, even though she doesn’t intend to agree with the adults if they don’t support her plans.

What should Olivia do?
Lucas has been working in an office on Wednesday afternoons after school. He is responsible for scanning and shredding documents, filing, and Xeroxing large publications. Every time he comes in on Wednesday there is plenty to do. He is always on time and has never missed a day of work.

Lucas likes the work because he knows exactly what is expected and can organize his time. The supervisor explained everything to him on the first day, and the responsibilities have not changed. Some days are busier than others, but Lucas always leaves with everything shredded, filed, or copied. He is proud of his work and would like to increase his hours when he graduates from high school.

He talked to his supervisor and asked if he would be able to work full-time starting July. The supervisor was pleased that Lucas was interested in staying at the company and said that he would investigate the possibility of increasing his work time.

When the supervisor met with Lucas last week, he explained that there wasn’t enough of the same work to justify five days a week. However, he had a list of additional tasks that Lucas could do in a full-time job.

Lucas looked at the list and realized that because of his disability he would have trouble doing some of the new work. For example, the supervisor wanted Lucas to clean out and organize the two supply rooms. Lucas wasn’t sure if he had the physical strength necessary to move boxes around. Plus he was beginning to feel overwhelmed with the long list of tasks. He started to feel that the supervisor had unreasonable expectations.

Lucas really wants to continue working there, but he’s concerned about what he will have to do to earn his pay.

What should Lucas do?
Melissa was so excited because she finally had a chance to do an internship. She is very talented on the computer and loves to create websites and do graphic designs for her friends. The employer has been very understanding about accommodations that Melissa needs to be able to work at the computer, so Melissa is all ready to go.

She is supposed to report every afternoon and work for three hours. At first she was given a basic data-entry assignment that she finished pretty quickly. When the supervisor saw that Melissa was done in two hours, she didn’t have any other work for her to do so she gave her a tour of the building.

On the second day, Melissa had more data entry and some corrections to make on a draft of a website. Again, it didn’t take Melissa long because she had good writing skills and could spot errors pretty quickly. When she told the supervisor she was finished, Melissa also asked if her supervisor was interested in her ideas about how to improve the layout of the website. The supervisor said, “Oh no, honey, we have two experts here who can take care of that.”

After two weeks Melissa began to realize that the office had not really planned for her workload and didn’t really know about Melissa’s skills. Every time she made a suggestion she was told that she didn’t need to worry about the work. If she actually went ahead and did something creative she got loads of compliments, but then she never heard anything about it again.

Melissa really wants to show what she can do and wants to learn from the internship. She talked to the Internship Coordinator at the school and was told that she needed to have a serious talk with her supervisor.

Melissa doesn’t really know what to say to the supervisor without sounding like a complainer. She’s afraid that they might decide they don’t need her as an intern after all.

What should Melissa do?
Joel has been taking job readiness classes and the first thing the class did was talk about their goals.

Joel has always had a goal. He wants to be a construction foreman and work on bridges and roads. His uncle had that job and just retired. He got to work outdoors and he made pretty good money. The best part was that he was always saying to Joel things like:

“We are driving over a bridge that I built!”

“This road is safe because I helped to fix it.”

Joel wanted to be able to say things like that, too.

But Joel’s uncle has also warned Joel that it took many years to earn the kind of money he earned. He usually couldn’t work in the winter so he either collected unemployment or moved temporarily to another part of the country. He was often tired and sore when he got home from work. He never got hurt on the job even though it could sometimes be pretty dangerous, and he had seen too many workers sidelined with injuries.

Joel’s uncle was trying to tell Joel the realities of the job. He told him that the work was irregular and these days you needed extra training to work your way up in the business. If you got a degree as a civil engineer you could still work on the job without all of the physical demands and stress of seasonal work. But it took five years to get an engineering degree. Joel had always required extra assistance from the school in getting his academic work done. He was not interested in pursuing further education and just wanted to get started working.

Joel doesn’t really care about the warnings of his uncle. He has always had the goal of doing this job and doesn’t want to change his plans.

What should Joel do?
ARE YOU SURE?

When Sophia was talking to her older sister about what she wanted to do when she graduated from high school, her sister recommended that she do something in healthcare.

She told Sophia that there were all kinds of jobs in hospitals, nursing homes, and doctor’s offices. She could work directly with patients or she could help out in other ways.

Sophia didn’t really know what she wanted to do, but she liked the idea of being able to find a job pretty easily. She looked in the local paper and on-line and saw that there were plenty of jobs for nurse’s aides, nurses, and other health care workers.

The Transition Coordinator at her school suggested to Sophia that she talk to someone at the Community College about what types of certifications they offered. Sophia made an appointment and took the bus over to the college.

She immediately loved being on the college campus. She felt older and comfortable there. After meeting with an Admissions Counselor she decided that she was going to complete one year of training as a phlebotomist, or someone who draws blood from patients. She would work with doctors and nurses but she wouldn’t have the same level of responsibility. She liked that idea.

The program not only taught her how to draw blood effectively, but she would also learn about anatomy, communication with patients, and record-keeping. She thought that she would like the job and wanted to be able to get to work as soon as she was certified.

Sophia had always needed academic assistance to get through school, but the Admissions counselor reassured her that the same assistance would be provided in college. Sophia was so enthusiastic about the training program that she didn’t worry about whether the college-level work would be too hard for her.

When Sophia came home from her college visit, she was excited to tell her parents about her decision. They were pleased for her, but her mother asked, “How do you know that you will like the job? You always hated going to the hospital! What if you go to school for a year and study really hard and you discover that you don’t like being a phlebotomist?”

What should Sophia do?
Marcel had a job on the weekends cutting lawns and trimming bushes for a local landscaper. He found the work to be very satisfying, even if the conditions were not always the best. He made good spending money and was learning a lot about landscaping.

Marcel knew that he needed to find a job after high school that would help out his family. He was going to be able to live at home, but his parents were asking him to contribute to the rent and food bill. Marcel was happy to do it, but wanted to make sure that he had a little money left over for himself.

He was hoping that the landscaper would take him on full-time in the summer, and then maybe let him work in the greenhouse over the winter months. He was trying hard to make a good impression, especially because he knew that another worker was leaving and Marcel could take his place.

Last Saturday Marcel was left alone in the backyard of a beautiful home while the landscaper went to meet with another client. Marcel was used to this and the landscaper trusted him. Marcel got his instructions and started to work tearing out a row of bushes that were planted along a walkway. Every once in awhile he would run the torn bushes through the shredder.

He was almost done when the owner of the house came out and started screaming at him. Marcel had ripped out the wrong bushes. And most of them were shredded.

Marcel was sure that the landscaper had pointed to the bushes that he had ripped out of the ground and shred. But he didn’t want to blame his boss. He also didn’t want to lose his job because of this terrible mistake. Replacing and replanting the bushes was going to cost a fortune.

Marcel could see his future in pieces, just like the bushes he had shredded.

What should Marcel do?
Chantelle didn’t make a lot of friends at school. Her best friend from middle school moved away and her close friend in high school was always with her boyfriend. Chantelle was able to hang out with some of the kids from her classes, but she mostly spent time by herself. She had trouble expressing herself sometimes, and the other students didn’t have the patience to wait for her to speak up. Besides, she thought that a lot of the things the high school students cared about were pretty lame. She was ready to graduate and start living her adult life.

She was often lonely, and filled her time with reading, television, and playing games on the computer.

Her teacher knew that Chantelle was feeling alone, and reassured her that when she went to work after high school she would make a lot of new friends. The teacher explained that in the workplace Chantelle would be surrounded by grownups and it would be easier to meet new people.

A few of her co-workers would behave just like kids in high school, but mostly she would be part of a team of people who are working toward a common goal. Her teacher thought that Chantelle would enjoy employment a lot more than high school.

The teacher suggested that Chantelle investigate jobs where she would have the chance to be around a lot of people. She should look at careers that require teamwork and cooperation. Chantelle doesn’t know where to begin.

What should Chantelle do?
Akili just returned from another job shadowing experience. Her teacher had arranged for her class to visit a number of different workplaces and follow the employees around for a couple of hours. The purpose was to find out more about the job and decide if it looked appealing.

Akili was not impressed so far. She felt that the jobs that she observed were boring and pointless. Who wanted to shuffle papers all day, or sit at a computer? Why would anyone want to spend time on the telephone talking to strangers, or even waiting on customers who were often rude?

Akili was friendly and energetic, but it seemed like these workers were slow-moving and methodical. They didn’t seem all that interested in their work. Even the tour of the restaurant showed lots of busy people who were working hard but not necessarily enjoying themselves. Were all workplaces like this?

Akili thought that work should be easy-going, relaxed, and fun. There should be a lot of activity and moving around, and a lot of laughter.

When she told her teacher about her observations, the teacher decided that Akili needed more opportunities to talk to the workers when they weren’t so busy. She brought some of the employees to the class and had them talk about their jobs. Akili was surprised at how enthusiastic they were about their jobs, even though they looked so serious when they were working. They explained that their job was to get the work done and be professional. They could laugh and enjoy their co-workers, but not at the expense of doing their jobs.

When she asked them if they liked their jobs, some of them said they worked hard because they loved it, and others said they worked hard because they needed the paycheck and didn’t really care if they loved it.

Akili really wants a job that matches her personality. She wants to love her work.

What should Akili do?
MTP Job Readiness Curriculum
Purpose and Objectives

Module 1 Purpose
The purpose of this Module is to assist students in setting personal goals and employment-related goals.
The activities and supplemental resources provided in this Module are designed for a range of abilities in transition classes at the high school level, allowing for differentiated instruction.

Module 1 Objectives
Students will:
- Identify personal interests and preferences
- Understand basic work-related goals that everyone should try to achieve
- Establish personal and general work-related goals
- Become familiar with job and career possibilities
- Understand the impact of employment on personal development and independence

Module 2 Purpose
The purpose of this Module is for students to understand and practice the steps involved in seeking employment.
The activities and supplemental resources provided in this Module are designed for a range of abilities in transition classes at the high school level, allowing for differentiated instruction.

Module 2 Objectives
Students will:
- Understand the purpose of employment
- Understand and practice the search for job openings, internships, and other work opportunities that match skills and abilities
- Understand and practice the job application and interview process
- Become familiar with job and career possibilities
- Understand components of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other legislation that protects the rights of individuals with disabilities

MTP Job Readiness Curriculum created by RRTI 2008-09
Module 3 Purpose

The purpose of this Module is for students to understand the significance of hygiene and communication in creating a first and lasting positive impression.

The activities and supplemental resources provided in this Module are designed for a range of abilities in transition classes at the high school level, allowing for differentiated instruction.

Module 3 Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the importance of daily hygiene at work
- Understand and practice appropriate greetings, including handshakes
- Understand and practice positive communication, both verbal and nonverbal
- Understand the role that employees play in both internal and external customer service

Module 4 Purpose

The purpose of this Module is to inform students about professional behavior at work, including how to handle the first days on the job, new friendships, and conflict.

The activities and supplemental resources provided in this Module are designed for a range of abilities in transition classes at the high school level, allowing for differentiated instruction.

Module 4 Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the characteristics of a professional employee
- Understand the importance of complying with the policies and procedures of the employer
- Become familiar with activities on the first days of a job
- Recognize the characteristics of positive friendships at work
- Become familiar with strategies for handling conflict at work
Module 5 Purpose
In this module students will learn how healthy living can affect success at work.
The activities and supplemental resources provided in this Module are designed for a range of abilities in transition classes at the high school level, allowing for differentiated instruction.

Module 5 Objectives
Students will:
- Understand the importance of punctuality and good attendance
- Become familiar with healthy living behaviors
- Understand basic strategies for managing stress while working
- Become familiar with paychecks and budgeting

Module 6 Purpose
The purpose of this Module is for students to improve their self-esteem so that they can feel confident on the job.
The activities and supplemental resources provided in this Module are designed for a range of abilities in transition classes at the high school level, allowing for differentiated instruction.

Module 6 Objectives
Students will:
- Understand the concept of self-esteem and how to improve their own self-esteem
- Understand strategies for building confidence on the job
- Recognize the importance of being a valued member of a work team
- Understand how to retain employment
MODEL TRANSITION PROGRAM
Job Readiness

SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUTS
Building Your Resumé

You may not realize what you can offer an employer. Ask others about your strong points!

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who To Ask</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>What Do They Think Should Go On Your Resumé?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidance Counselors</td>
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<td>Coaches</td>
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<td>Club Supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Building Your Resumé – MTP Supplemental Handout
Job Searches

Go to each of these sites to become familiar with how they are organized. Practice searching.

www.monster.com

Are there any jobs in Buffalo, NY in automotive repair, or data entry in Rochester, NY?

www.careerbuilder.com

Name 5 jobs that are currently in your geographic area. (They should come up on the home page.)

www.thingamajob.com

What are the manufacturing jobs that are available? Where are they? Are there desktop support jobs (technology) in New York State?

www.craigslist.org

What jobs are offered currently in the food/beverage/hospitality category?

Find local sites:
- Local on-line newspaper job search site
- Local community college career and employment center sites
- Local radio job search sites
- Local Chamber of Commerce job search site
Use this worksheet to capture skills you’ve attained from any aspect of your life that are transferable and applicable to the job you want next. Consider skills used in jobs, classes, extracurricular activities, internships, volunteer/community-service work, travel, work, projects, parenting, hobbies, sports, and more.

**Start with the 5 skills that almost all employers seek:**

1. **Communication skills:** Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. **Interpersonal skills:** Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
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   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. **Teamwork skills:** Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

   __________________________________________
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4. **Leadership skills:** Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
5. *Computer/Information technology skills:* Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you've shined using this skill:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

**Now, identify your skills in the second tier of most-in-demand skills:**

6. *Adaptability/flexibility skills:* Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you've shined using this skill:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

7. *Problem-solving skills:* Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you've shined using this skill:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

8. *Organizational skills:* Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you've shined using this skill:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

9. *Analytical skills:* Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you've shined using this skill:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
10. *Research and Planning skills:* Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

*Now, list skills specific to the job/type of job you’re applying for. Get this information from the employment ad, job posting, or job description for the position.*

Listed skill:

______________________________________________________________________________

Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Listed skill:

______________________________________________________________________________

Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Listed skill:

______________________________________________________________________________

Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:
Listed skill:

Give examples of how you have used this skill, especially examples of how you’ve shined using this skill:

Now, one last group of skill sets. Review these lists and in the remaining spaces, give examples of how you have used the skills that apply to you (and are relevant to the job/type of job you seek), especially examples of how you’ve shined using these skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research/Planning</th>
<th>Human Relations</th>
<th>Organizational/Management</th>
<th>Work Survival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Forecasting, predicting</td>
<td>- Developing rapport</td>
<td>- Initiating new ideas</td>
<td>- Implementing decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creating ideas</td>
<td>- Being sensitive</td>
<td>- Handling details</td>
<td>- Cooperating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifying problems</td>
<td>- Listening</td>
<td>- Coordinating tasks</td>
<td>- Enforcing policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Imagining alternatives</td>
<td>- Conveying feelings</td>
<td>- Managing groups</td>
<td>- Being punctual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifying resources</td>
<td>- Providing support for others</td>
<td>- Delegating responsibility</td>
<td>- Managing time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gathering information</td>
<td>- Motivating</td>
<td>- Teaching</td>
<td>- Attending to detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Solving problems</td>
<td>- Sharing credit</td>
<td>- Coaching</td>
<td>- Meeting goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Setting goals</td>
<td>- Counseling</td>
<td>- Counseling</td>
<td>- Enlisting help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Extracting important information</td>
<td>- Cooperating</td>
<td>- Promoting change</td>
<td>- Accepting responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Defining needs</td>
<td>- Delegating with respect</td>
<td>- Selling ideas or products</td>
<td>- Setting and meeting deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Analyzing</td>
<td>- Representing others</td>
<td>- Decision making with others</td>
<td>- Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Developing evaluation strategies</td>
<td>- Perceiving feelings, situations</td>
<td>- Managing conflict</td>
<td>- Making decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Asserting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Job Searching In A Tight Economy

When there are several applicants for few jobs, it is important to do everything possible to receive serious consideration.

- Research the background of the places where you will be applying.
- Review your application or cover letter and résumé for errors. Tailor your application to the employer.
- Ask at least 2 people to review your application.
- Make sure you have highlighted your strong points. Are you hiding your skills?
- Check with your references to discuss what you would like them to emphasize about your skills and job search.
- Include positive adjectives and descriptions of your experiences and qualities in your application.
- Dress for job success, even if you are just dropping off an application. Be clean.
- Practice phone calls and interviews.
- Be prepared to answer phone calls from employers so that you can show that you are serious and professional.
- Enroll in classes, training programs, or online education to show that you are interested in building your skills.
- Volunteer in your field of interest as you seek paid work.
- Don’t get discouraged! Employers appreciate candidates who demonstrate perseverance and a clear interest in working.
Sometimes it is hard to remember what you have accomplished in high school. Maybe you don’t have blue ribbons and awards or a long list of activities or leadership experiences.

But it is hard to get through high school and you have accomplished a lot!

Think about the following questions. Talk to your friends and teachers and ask them if they can help you to answer them. Then use the answers in job applications and interviews.

1. When did you do something that was above and beyond what was expected?

2. When has a group benefited from your participation?

3. What is one thing that you are really proud of?

4. Describe one complicated problem that you solved.

5. If you had to write a letter of recommendation about yourself, what would you say?
**EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION**

The U.S. Department of Labor provides links to a variety of education and training website resources. Go to [www.careeronestop.org/default/aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/default/aspx) and click on Education and Training at the top of the page. This link will lead you to additional links about certification and apprenticeship programs, community colleges, and other sources of training after high school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION &amp; TRAINING OPTIONS</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>An employer’s formal training program combining on-the-job learning with technical instruction for a specific trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certifications</td>
<td>An examination or a record of work-related credentials issued to an individual by an external organization to communicate a certain level of skill attainment. Required in some occupations, for example nursing assistants and financial advisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>Institution typically offering two-year or associate of arts degree that can transfer to a four-year college or university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical College</td>
<td>One- to two-year training programs in a variety of subject areas. Short-term training also available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year College or University</td>
<td>Earn a bachelor of arts or bachelor of science degree in your chosen field of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customized Training</td>
<td>Topic-specific, short-term training designed for a specific employer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships</td>
<td>Opportunity for hands-on, real work experience. May be required in some college majors, or may be an entry-level internship you apply for after graduating college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Corps</td>
<td>A free, Department of Labor program designed for individuals ages 16-24 to obtain training and job skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Shadowing</td>
<td>A short-term visit to a worksite. Choose a career of interest and set up a time to follow someone on the job throughout his or her workday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Training to enhance your job skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Training</td>
<td>Federal program that provides short-term training and education at technical colleges, community colleges, and universities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USE THE SAME SITE TO FIND OUT:

- What is a certification?
  Hint: Under Education and Training look under “FIND.”

- What is an apprenticeship? Are there any available in your area?
  Hint: Under Education and Training look under “FIND.”

- Where is your local One-Stop Career Center?
  Hint: Under Education and Training look under Apprenticeship.)
RESUMÉ KEYWORDS WORKSHEET

Print out a copy of this worksheet for each job you apply for and use it to identify keywords that are relevant to each. Use the keywords from each job to tailor your resumé and cover letter to specific jobs and employers.

Name of position: ________________________________

Name of employer: ________________________________

Key words from want ad, Internet job posting, or job description.

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Keywords from employer Website:

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Employer mission statement:

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Keywords from other sources, such as professional associations, recruiters and HR professionals, the Occupational Outlook Handbook (http://www.bls.gov/oco/), members of your network, trade publications, industry-specific online discussion groups, annual reports, informational interviews, and search engines such as Google.

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Resumé Keywords Worksheet – MTP Supplemental Handout
Certifications

Certifications are examinations that test or enhance your knowledge, experience, or skills in an occupation. New York State may require certification in the following fields.

Choose 3 fields that interest you and research their certification requirements. Begin with the U.S. Department of Labor Certification Finder. (http://www.careerinfonet.org/certifications_new/default.aspx). Then check out the websites of the New York State Department of Labor and the New York State Education Department (Office of the Professions).

Architecture and Engineering

__ Architects, Except Landscape and Naval Engineers
__ Landscape Architects
__ Surveyors

Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media

__ Interior Designers

Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance

__ Pesticide Handlers, Sprayers, and Applicators, Vegetation

Business and Financial Operations

__ Accountants
__ Agents and Business Managers of Artists, Performers, and Athletes
__ Appraisers, Real Estate
__ Financial Specialists, All Other
__ Insurance Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators

Community and Social Services

__ Social Workers, All Other
__ Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors
Construction and Extraction

- Construction and Building Inspectors
- Earth Drillers, Except Oil and Gas
- Explosives Workers, Ordnance Handling Experts, and Blasters
- Hazardous Materials Removal Workers

Education, Training, and Library

- Self-Enrichment Education Teachers
- Teachers and Instructors

Farming, Fishing, and Forestry

- Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products

Healthcare Practitioners and Technical

- Athletic Trainers
- Audiologists
- Chiropractors
- Dental Hygienists
- Dentists
- Dietitians and Nutritionists
- Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics
- Health Diagnosing and treating Practitioners, All Other
- Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other
- Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
- Medical and Clinical laboratory Technicians
- Occupational Health and Safety Specialists
- Occupational Therapists
- Opticians, Dispensing
- Optometrists
- Pharmacists
- Physical Therapists
- Physician Assistants
- Physicians and Surgeons, All Other
- Podiatrists
- Radiologic Technologists
- Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
- Registered Nurses
- Respiratory Therapists
- Respiratory Therapy technicians
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Veterinarians
- Veterinary Technologists and Technicians
Healthcare Support

- Dental Assistants
- Healthcare Support Workers
- Massage Therapists
- Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants
- Occupational Therapist Assistants
- Physical Therapist Assistants

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair

- Security and Fire Alarm Systems Installers

Legal

- Court Reporters
- Lawyers

Life, Physical and Social Science

- Food Science Technicians
- Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists
- Psychologists

Management

- Education Administrators
- Funeral Directors
- Managers, All Other
- Medical and Health Services Managers

Personal Care and Service

- Barbers
- Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists
- Manicurists and Pedicurists
- Personal Care and Service Workers
- Skin Care Specialists
- Tour Guides and Escorts

Production

- Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
- Water and Liquid Waste Treatment Plant and System Operators
- Welders, Cutters, and Welder Fitters
Protective Services

- Private Detectives and Investigators
- Security Guards

Sales Related

- Insurance Sales Agents
- Real Estate Brokers
- Real Estate Sales Agents

Transportation and Material Moving

- Bus Drivers, School
- Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity
- Crane and Tower Operators
- Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs
- Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer

Interested in getting certified?

See the handout on Education and Training information to find out where certificate programs are offered. Also contact your guidance counselor and the nearest Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to ask about their post-high school vocational training programs.

(http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/sedcar/schoollsts/boces.htm)
In a Nutshell

How can you quickly describe yourself on a resumé or in an interview?

1. Circle words that describe you.
2. Add more descriptive words.
3. Write a short description of yourself using the descriptive words, beginning with: I am...

Adaptable
Analytical
Approachable
Bilingual
Calm
Compassionate
Creative
Customer-focused
Detail-oriented
Diplomatic
Energetic
Hard-working
Innovative
Level-headed
Organized
Personable
Productive
Reliable
Resourceful
Respected
Self-directed
Service-oriented
Team-oriented
Planner
Problem-solver
Self-starter
Adapts well to fast-paced environment
Positive attitude
Ability to see opportunity in challenging situations
Adept at analyzing situations
Able to produce effectively under deadline
Proven communication skills
Quick learner
Strong quantitative skills

I am

In A Nutshell – MTP Supplemental Handout
Self-Advocacy

In your new job you may find that you need to explain your disability or request accommodations.

It is important to advocate for yourself so that your needs are met and you are treated with respect. The following steps can help you to become a successful self-advocate.

1. What is your disability?

Be prepared to identify your disability in a way that is clear to your employer, but comfortable for you. Talk to teachers and family members about how you can explain your disability. Also figure out how to describe your abilities.

What will you say?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What accommodations might be necessary for you?

Research accommodations and assistive technology that may be useful in your job. Determine how you will request accommodations.

What will you say?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. What other adjustments in the workplace could help you to get your work done?

These adjustments may not be required legally, but should at least be discussed with your employer.

What will you say?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Who Can You Contact About A Job?

Sometimes jobs are found by talking to friends, relatives, neighbors, teachers, and guidance counselors. They may know of a job that is perfect for you. They may be able to recommend you for a job. Or maybe they are in a position to hire!

You can’t find out about jobs unless you spread the word that you are looking.

Who can you contact?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbors</th>
<th>School Personnel</th>
<th>Friends (and their parents!)</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>Local Stores and Restaurants</td>
<td>Coaches or Club Supervisors</td>
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<td>Your Religious Center</td>
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<td>Health Care and Counselors</td>
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</table>
Prepare To Do Your Best

As you start your job search you may be concerned about the impression that you will make. Don’t worry! If you plan ahead you can make a good impression. Prepare to do your best!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will you do to make sure that you look clean and presentable?</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will you say when you first meet an employer?</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you want the employer to know about you? How will you share this information?</th>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can you do to show confidence?</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How can you relax so you can do your best?</th>
</tr>
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</table>
I’m Getting A Job!

Before you talk to your friends and family about your job search, you might want to be prepared for their reactions.

- Will they be excited for you?
- Worried?
- Helpful and supportive?

What are your reasons for working?

- Money
- New Friends
- Work Experience
- Independence
- Opportunities for training
- Required for certification
- __________________________
- __________________________
- __________________________

How will you respond to these questions?

- How do you plan on getting to work?
- What will you do with your money?
- How will you do a job with a disability?
- What kind of job do you want?
- What are your qualifications?
Educating Co-Workers About Your Disability

It is important to determine what you will tell your co-workers about your disability. You need to protect your health and safety and you want to make sure that they have accurate information.

Once you have started your new job you can figure out who to tell and when to tell them. In the meantime, think about what you might say.

- What if you need help getting some of your tasks done?
- What if you need a restroom break or a short rest?
- What is the most effective way to communicate with you?
- What if you are not feeling well or there is an emergency?
- How much information will you share about your medications?
- What are your concerns about building access?
- What should be done if there is a building evacuation?
- Do you need accommodations or assistive technology?
When you are thinking about what career you would like, don’t limit your ideas to traditional jobs that everyone knows about. There are always new jobs that may be interesting to you!

Using the Internet, research these careers for the future. What are these jobs? Do they interest you?

Respiratory Therapist

Financial Counselor

Futurist

Emergency Medical Technician

Wetlands Delineator

Internet Marketing Specialist

Genetics Technician

Animation Specialist

Quarantine Manager

Technical Writer

Robot Mechanic

Homeland Security Specialist

Alternative Energy Engineer

Biological Scientist

What other jobs of the future can you find?
When you start looking for a job after high school you will have a lot of important questions to think about. Discuss the following questions with a trusted friend or family member. You may not come to any final conclusions, but you will have explored some tough questions.

1. What can you personally accomplish in a job?

2. How do you think working in a job will be different than high school?

3. Do you think that you have realistic expectations about working in a job?

4. What will you do if you have trouble getting a job?

5. What will you miss about high school?

6. How do you think you will handle it if your co-workers do not seem to understand how you may need accommodations?

7. What worries you about going to work?

8. Who will you turn to if you are having trouble in your new job?

9. What do you think you can contribute to the organization that hires you no matter what the job is?

10. What if you don’t like the job that you get?
PLANNING FOR DISCLOSURE

Check out the organizational culture

- Are there other employees with disabilities?
- Have employers been respectful about your disability?

Wait before you disclose

- Decide when you want to disclose, usually during a second interview if accommodations may be necessary
- Determine who needs to know (for your health and safety and to protect the organization)
- Think about whether it will be stressful to hide your disability
- Start with someone you trust

Know your rights

- Make sure that you are familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act

Practice

- Ask friends and family members if you can practice disclosing your disability

Get Support

- If you decide not to disclose, ask others outside of work for their support
Like many people with a disability, you may be wondering – Should I disclose my disability to an employer? When? Under what conditions? How?

Let’s explore and weigh the options…But first, let’s highlight a few basics!

**Disclosure Basics:**

When it comes to disclosing your disability, be aware of the following:

- It’s your personal choice.
- You’re not required to disclose your disability unless you need to request an accommodation.
- Employers may only inquire about your ability to perform essential job functions, not inquire about your disability.
- If you don’t need an accommodation, you don’t need to disclose, and you can choose not to – but be aware that if you don’t disclose, you’re not covered under ADA.
- If you choose to disclose, disclose at the time when you feel it will best work to your advantage in getting hired.
- Although employers may not inquire about your disability in the hiring process, some applicants find it helpful to share information with the employer – to put the employer at ease.

Now, let’s look at the various stages when disclosure is possible, and weigh the “timing” pros and cons…
When Disclosure is Possible:

Disclosure can take place at any of these times…

◆ **Agency contact** –

Your counselor or job specialist from Vocational Rehabilitation, the Commission for the Blind, or other agency makes direct contact with an employer on your behalf. In this case, you’re off the hook! Disclosure will be taken care of for you.

◆ **An application, resume or cover letter** –

**This might be a good time if:** an employer is interested in hiring and recruiting individuals with disabilities; the job involves serving people with disabilities; the employer shows interest and support, and perceives disabilities in a positive way; the employer has had positive experiences employing people with disabilities.

If you choose to disclose your disability in a cover letter, present the information in a positive way and highlight the advantages when applicable.

For example:

“As I have a physical disability, I serve as a positive role model for students who face similar challenges.” or…

“I possess extensive computer experience and have a proven track record of successfully setting up and managing data files by utilizing screen magnification needed for my vision impairment.”

**This might be a less desirable time if:** the employer has had no experience employing individuals with disabilities; the employer has no experience providing accommodations; the employer has had a difficult or negative past experience.
When the employer calls to schedule an interview –

This might be a good time if: you need to request an accommodation for the interview or an application procedure; you have a visible disability, use a guide dog, or use special equipment, and you want to avoid awkwardness during the interview.

In a confidential manner, you might simply say –

“Incidentally, I use a wheelchair. Is the meeting location accessible?” or …

“I want you to know I have a vision impairment, and my guide dog, Thad, will be with me when I arrive for the meeting.” or …

“I understand I'll need to complete a supplemental application. Because of my learning disability, I wonder if I could arrange to arrive earlier than scheduled so I have additional time to complete the form. I use a spell checker I'll be happy to bring along.”

At the interview –

This might be a good time if: you have a visible disability, and you feel the surprise factor works in your favor – but be aware the surprise may distract and preoccupy the employer during the interview.

Some people feel this approach avoids employers having a chance to develop any preconceived ideas. After the initial surprise, the applicant works to refocus the employer's attention by displaying professionalism in dress and manner while interacting in a friendly way. This approach requires employer's attention in a positive way. It's not something everyone can do with guaranteed success.

Before the job offer –

This might be a good time if: you will need a job accommodation; you have a disability that will affect your work.

You might say something like –

“I want you to know I have a moderate hearing loss. I use a hearing aid and read lips, so I would be able to communicate with bank customers and co-workers without a problem. But to place calls, I would need one piece of equipment – a TTY, I have one at home I would be happy to bring to use temporarily. If one needed to be purchased, a business tax deduction or credit might be available to your company to help defray the cost.”
◆ After the job offer but before you accept the job –

This might be a good time if: you have an invisible disability, and the disability won’t affect your job performance; you have an invisible disability that won’t require an accommodation. For example, you might want to inform the employer of a seizure disorder controlled by medication, or a back injury, so the employer will be aware.

This might be a less desirable time if: the employer interprets your timing of disclosure as deceitful. Some employers might feel resentment for your having waiting until the job offer was made, even if no accommodation is needed, and the disability won’t affect your performance.

◆ After you begin the job –

This would be a good time if: you discover after starting the job you need an accommodation.

As you can see, there are many times when disclosure can occur – if you choose to disclose at all. When it comes to timing, the best timing to disclose is when the time works best for you!

Source: Career and Employment Guide for Job Seekers and Employees with Disabilities.

and

Guide for Employers: How to Recruit, Interview, Hire and Accommodate People with Disabilities

Prepared by: Robin Jacobs, Office for Students with Disabilities, Portland Community College

http://spot.pcc.edu/~rjacobs/career/job_search_preparation.htm
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<tr>
<th>Go to bed early</th>
<th>Arrange for transportation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Get your clothes ready</td>
<td>Shower and Shave</td>
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<td>Get your questions ready</td>
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### What Skills Do You Have

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What Skills Do You Have - MTP Supplemental Handout
This activity was created for workers who are trying to manage their work lives and family responsibilities. The tips provided are just as relevant for a new employee who is living in home or with roommates in a house or apartment. When you start a job, internship, or volunteer activity, complete the pie charts on these pages. Then read the tips to managing time so that you feel comfortable and can enjoy your busy days.
My Real Life

What’s your life really like? How do you spend each day? We know that life is full of surprises, and often times our goals, plans and desires are altered by unexpected situations. However, if you’re not careful and focused, then you’ll find yourself investing most of your time in undesirable activities while you neglect what matters most to you.

How are you investing your time? Here’s an exercise to help you examine this investment. In this exercise you will create a pie chart to help you form a visual picture of how you currently spend your time. Using the life categories below, chart out how much time you spend doing each of these activities on a monthly basis. Please feel free to add categories that apply to your lifestyle.

**Life Categories:**
- Work
- Family
- Friendship/Relationships
- Recreation
- Physical/Healthy Activity
- Personal/Spiritual/
  - Religious Growth
- Community

What does this chart reveal to you? Are you pleased with your results?
My Ideal Life

We know that everything doesn’t go just the way we planned all the time. However, there’s nothing wrong with dreaming! Ideally speaking, how would you spend your time if there were no unexpected changes and your life was perfectly balanced?

Here’s an exercise to help you visualize your ideal life. Using the life categories below, create a pie chart that will measure how much time you wish to spend doing each of these activities on a monthly basis. Please feel free to add categories that apply to your lifestyle.

**Life Categories:**
- Work
- Family
- Friendship/Relationships
- Recreation
- Physical/ Healthy Activity
- Personal/Spiritual/
  - Religious Growth
- Community

What does this chart reveal to you? Compare this chart with your Real Life chart.
Does My Ideal Match My Reality?
_A Comparison of the Two Pie Charts_

It is a good idea to compare your “Real Pie” with your “Ideal Pie” and consider these questions:

**If the pie slices for a certain category are similar or the same,** it is likely that that area of your life is in balance. Ask yourself:

- What methods did I use to create balance in this area of my life?
- How can I apply those same methods to help balance other areas of my life?

Every 6 months, check in with yourself and ensure that your life is still well-balanced. To do this, you may want to use the “Real Life” and “Ideal Life” pie charts we’ve used today.

**If the pie slices are not similar,** you may need to find ways to strike a balance in that area of your life. Ask yourself:

- Where am I out of balance? (What area(s) of my life is/are now getting more or less time and attention than I would like?)
- Why am I out of balance?
- What am I doing now that I would be willing to change in order to have more time for what’s important to me?

As you make changes, check in with yourself every 6 months to see if you’re balancing your life successfully. To do this, you may want to use the “Real Life” and “Ideal Life” pie charts we’ve used today.
Tips for Balancing Work and Personal Life

Try What Sounds Useful and Find What Works Best for You

Schedule Your Priorities

- **Set goals.** Think about what you want to accomplish daily and in the future. Make sure your short-term goals support your long-term goals. Stay focused on your goals each day.
- **Know what is expected of you at work.** Be clear about what is more important to your agency. Ask your supervisor to review expectations of your work performance and how they fit into the overall mission of the agency. Understanding how your work contributes to the success of your agency will help you set priorities that will make you successful.
- **Understand what each family member values.** This will help you spend quality time with the ones you love in a way that is meaningful to everyone.

For example, if you can only attend one after-school activity per week, make sure it is the one that is most meaningful to your child.

Ask your partner what you can do to lighten his or her load each day or week. This will help you learn what your partner needs and will make them feel valued and supported.

Stay focused on what you need. Make sure that you have at least a few hours a week to do what nourishes and replenishes you.

Communicate Your Needs

- If you are unsure of what is expected of you at work, ask for direction and clarification of your tasks.
- If you feel overloaded at work, ask your supervisor for help in prioritizing your tasks.
- At home, have family meetings to plan for the week ahead. Designate a communications center. Hang a bulletin board and family calendar in a central location. Instruct each family member to record activities – games, practices, after-school job hours, social events, etc. – on the calendar.
- Let family members know what you expect from the household. Invite all to brainstorm solutions and delegate responsibilities for meeting household needs.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Express your appreciation.

Modify Responsibilities

- Divide and share household responsibilities according to likes/dislikes, skills and availability.
- Communicate the standard of quality that is expected for household chores.
- At home, be flexible with scheduling.
- Find ways to make family chores fun for everyone.

(Continued)
**Be Efficient**
- Plan menus ahead of time and have ingredients on-hand.
- Cook in big batches ahead of time and freeze. You can eat pre-prepared meals throughout the week on late work-nights or nights when family activities prevent cooking a full meal.
- Shop during off-peak hours.
- Batch errands and complete in a reasonable order.
- Prepare school lunches, clothing, backpacks and briefcases the night before. Keep outerwear, bags and shoes by the door each evening so they are easy to find in the morning.
- Limit morning choices. Allow children only two outfits to choose from, two cereals, etc.
- Teach children how to save time by planning ahead and being prepared.

**Improve Your Physical and Mental Health by Engaging in Meaningful Activities**
- Get regular exercise.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Get enough rest.
- Pay attention to your body and what it needs.
- Make time for yourself.
- Travel slightly before or after the rush hour.
- Use commute time for personal growth activities such as reading, practicing relaxation techniques, or even learning a new language. You may also want to use this time to plan ahead for the day’s work or to relax and prepare for your return home.
- Develop a hobby or interest.
- Go on outings and vacations.

**Enhance Satisfying Relationships**

*Relationship with partner*
- Schedule time to be alone with each other. Fun should be a daily activity.
- Encourage your partner often.
- Be willing to share your thoughts and feelings and listen to your partner.

*Relationship with children*
- Schedule time each evening for a family activity. Play cards or a board game, or take the dog for a walk.
- Plan outings that will be meaningful to the entire family.
- Create a “coming home from work” routine with children that gives everyone what they need. For example, to ease transition from work to home, you may want fifteen minutes to yourself when you first get home. Take a bath or shower, lie down or read the mail. Let children know to expect this and that they will have your full attention once you have had time to unwind.

(Continued)
Relationship with friends/relatives/co-workers

- Spend at least a few hours a week doing an activity with a friend that you both enjoy.
- Maintain friendly relationships with co-workers. This can help improve communication and make work more enjoyable.
- Write one letter or make one phone call per week to a long-distance friend of relative.

Source: http://ci.billings.mt.us/Documentview.asp?DID=301
The Evaluation Experience

After you have been on the job for awhile, you will probably get evaluated by your supervisor.

Some organizations have a complicated evaluation system that involves lots of forms, rating scales, and calculations that may affect your future income.

Others may have informal systems where your supervisor has a casual conversation with you and writes a few notes for your personnel file.

And in some organizations the supervisors never tell you how you are doing, so you are always guessing about whether you are succeeding in your job.

Attached are sample evaluation forms that might be used when you are employed. Look them over to see what a supervisor is looking for. Even if the supervisor doesn't have to fill out a form, these samples will show you what is usually expected of an employee.

Before you start work, decide what you would like to see on an evaluation form. What would you like a supervisor to write about you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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The Evaluation Experience – MTP Supplemental Handout
Northwestern Health Sciences University
PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

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<th>Employee Name</th>
<th>Position Title</th>
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<th>Date of Evaluation</th>
<th>Date of Last Evaluation</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Evaluator</th>
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Reason for Evaluation

____ Annual ______ Promotion ______ Other

I. **Key Responsibilities**: List major responsibilities, primary duties or important functions of this employee.

II. **Accomplishments**: Review each key responsibility area and note any accomplishments the employee has made.

III. **Key Performance Factors**: Review the employee’s performance in each area listed and note where the employee excels and where improvement is necessary.

**Rating Scale:**

1. **Does Not Meet Expectations**: Does not meet the minimum requirements of the position or only occasionally acceptable
2. **Needs Improvement**: Performance is inconsistent; meets some job requirements but not consistently.
3. **Meets Expectations**: Consistently meets the requirements of the position in all aspects
4. **Exceeds Expectations**: Unique and exceptional accomplishments
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key Performance Factors</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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| Describe how the employee’s performance compares to stated expectations and objectives communicated at last appraisal and throughout the rating period. Identify employee strengths in the areas of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to do the job. Identify areas where you see improvement is necessary. | | | Exceeds Expectations  
|  |  | Meets Expectations  
|  |  | Needs Improvement  
|  |  | Does Not Meet Expectations |
| **Job Knowledge:**  
Consider degree of job knowledge relative to length of time in the current position. Consider the individual’s efforts to learn new skills and maintain up-to-date job related information. Applies technical and procedural know-how to get the job done; understands job duties and responsibilities; has necessary job skills and knowledge; understands and promotes department mission and values; keeps informed of the latest developments in the area of specialty; monitors events which impact functional areas. | | | Exceeds Expectations  
|  |  | Meets Expectations  
|  |  | Needs Improvement  
|  |  | Does Not Meet Expectations |
| **Communication:**  
Effectively conveys and receives ideas, information and directions; seeks to clarify and confirm the accuracy of their understanding of unfamiliar or vague terms and instructions; listens effectively; demonstrates good verbal and written communication | | | Exceeds Expectations  
|  |  | Meets Expectations  
|  |  | Needs Improvement  
|  |  | Does Not Meet Expectations |
| **Teamwork/Collaboration:**  
Successfully works with others to achieve desired results; contributes to team projects; exchanges ideas, opinions; helps prevent, resolve conflicts; develops positive working relationships; is flexible, open-minded; promotes mutual respect. | | | Exceeds Expectations  
|  |  | Meets Expectations  
|  |  | Needs Improvement  
|  |  | Does Not Meet Expectations |
| **Productivity:**  
Maintains fair work load; takes on additional responsibilities as needed; manages priorities; develops and follows work procedures; completes assignments on time and to specifications. | | | Exceeds Expectations  
|  |  | Meets Expectations  
|  |  | Needs Improvement  
|  |  | Does Not Meet Expectations |
| **Planning and Organizing:**  
Develops realistic plans; balances short and long-term goals; uses time and resources effectively; prioritizes duties in a manner consistent with organizational objectives and emergencies; meets deadlines and follows through; requests assistance when necessary to complete duties. | | | Exceeds Expectations  
|  |  | Meets Expectations  
|  |  | Needs Improvement  
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<td>Describe how the employee’s performance compares to stated expectations and objectives communicated at last appraisal and throughout the rating period. Identify employee strengths in the areas of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to do the job. Identify areas where you see improvement is necessary.</td>
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<td><strong>Problem Solving:</strong></td>
<td>Anticipates and prevents problems; defines problems, identifies solutions; overcomes obstacles; helps team solve problems.</td>
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<td><strong>Initiative:</strong></td>
<td>Pursues goals with commitment and takes initiative eagerly; results-oriented; desires to excel on the job; works steadily and actively; demonstrates self-confidence and positive attitude.</td>
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<td><strong>Customer Orientation:</strong></td>
<td>Listens, identifies, and responds quickly and effectively to internal and external customers’ needs and sets work activities accordingly; goes beyond what is expected and follows up to ensure customer satisfaction.</td>
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<td><strong>Quality:</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates accuracy, thoroughness, and reliability; manages time and priorities; develops and follows work procedures.</td>
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<td><strong>Diversity:</strong></td>
<td>Treats everyone equitably and fairly; embraces diversity in daily work life; works with diverse group of employees comfortably and willingly.</td>
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<td><strong>Attendance:</strong></td>
<td>Consistently is on time and ready to work at the start of shift and after breaks; requires no start-up time; always provides proper notification or advance notice for absence or tardiness.</td>
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<td><strong>Contributions to Campus/Community:</strong></td>
<td>Participation on campus committees, task forces or in campus service events; participation in community based service activities</td>
<td>[ ] Exceeds Expectations [ ] Meets Expectations [ ] Needs Improvement [ ] Does Not Meet Expectations</td>
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OBJECTIVES FOR UPCOMING REVIEW

I. Performance Plan: Identify specific actions/behaviors the employee needs to either start doing, stop doing and/or continue in the upcoming performance period.

II. Development Plans: Identify specific work assignments and topics for training designed to increase individual’s effectiveness on present job and prepare for future job assignments.

III. Employee Comments: Enter below any comments you wish to make about your appraisal or the objectives for the upcoming year.

Employee Signature        Date
(Your signature does not necessarily signify your agreement with the appraisal; it simply means that the appraisal has been discussed with you).

Evaluator Signature        Date
Employee Self-Appraisal

Name:_______________________________________ Employed Since: __________________ Date: _______________
Department:______________________________________ Supervisor:_______________________________________
Current Position/Title:______________________________________ Length of Time in current position: _____________

In your own words write a brief description of your job responsibilities:

Please answer the following six questions:

1. List your most significant accomplishments or contributions since your last review.

Manager’s comments:

2. List any special accomplishments, awards, activities, or recognition (on or off the job) since your last review that should be noted.

Manager’s comments:

3. Describe any challenges which make it difficult for you to effectively fulfill your responsibilities.

Manager’s comments:
4. What do you feel you could do to improve your performance and/or meet your objectives more effectively? In what areas do you feel that you need added support, structure and/or direction?

Manager’s comments:

5. Do you have any questions about what is expected of you on the job? Are there any areas that are unclear? Are there any areas that you think should be reconsidered?

Manager’s comments:

6. What objectives do you think we should set for next year?

Manager’s comments:

Goals / Objectives:

Notes and/or additional comments:

Supervisor’s Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: _______________________

Employee’s Signature: ___________________________________________ Date ________________________
Coping with Your Disability in the Workplace

Managing a disability in the workplace can be overwhelming if those around you do not understand your needs. In addition to managing the day-to-day stress of work and family life, there may be additional concerns that are not apparent to your coworkers and/or supervisors. You may not know how to address questions from others and/or how to handle people who do not appear to understand or believe that you have a disability. You may be coming to terms with the impact that the disability could have on your career choices. You may have questions about your ability to handle your workload and may be fearful of missing opportunities. A key point to keep in mind is that you need to feel comfortable with the work environment you are in. This will require you to educate others about what you need from them and advocate for yourself when your needs have been overlooked.

Have a Support System in Place

In dealing with any stress in life, it is important to have a system of supports in place to help you manage the conflicts that may arise at home and at leisure. This system of supports can include family, friends, coworkers, supervisors, managers, religious affiliations, workplace and community resources, support groups, etc. Your support system can provide you with additional resources when you are confronted with problems or issues that you cannot handle on your own. Try to organize a disability support group within your organization. Such a group can provide those involved with the opportunity to gain support and guidance in regards to the particular work and family issues that arise at work. Take advantage of your supports and view your ability to do so as a strength.

Communication is Key

Give feedback to others about what you need in order to do your job effectively. There may be times when changes are made in your work environment that do not take your needs into consideration. Be sure you are included in the planning. When conflicts arise, address the issues immediately in order to begin problem solving. Talk about any limitations resulting from your disability in regards to work assignments. Above all, ask your co-workers and supervisors to seek your opinion regarding what you can and cannot do. Make it clear that you do not want to miss out on activities and will let them know if any problems arise. Keep in mind that you have a right to confidentiality and others need to be respectful of your privacy concerns. You will also want them to know how to help you in emergencies.

Become familiar with Workplace Programs and Policies regarding Disability Issues

You will want to seek assistance through the workplace to help you manage your disability. Often, in larger organizations, there is a division that has been set aside to help employees manage disabilities in the workplace. The Federal Office of Equal Employment Opportunity is a resource. You will find that an accommodations manager can provide you with materials and resources to enable you to efficiently meet the requirements of the job. Seek out assistance through your Employee Assistance Program. EAP counselors will assess your concerns and offer assistance and referrals to help you manage your disability at work and home.
Practice Stress Management Techniques

Take time to take care of yourself. With the busy schedules that employees are now experiencing, it becomes critical that "down time" is scheduled into every day if possible. If your disability creates physical limitations for you, rest is especially important to maintain your stamina. Talk with your physician. Get his/her recommendations on ways to benefit from relaxation exercises. Practice deep breathing, tai chi, meditation and/or yoga. Exercise and maintain a nutritious diet. Take up hobbies and/or other activities for fun. Become involved in community groups or volunteer organizations. The list is endless! The important part is to make time for yourself! Actively manage your disability at work and at home.

Additional Resources

www.disABLEDperson.com - website containing information for persons with disabilities, including recruiting section with sponsoring employers.

www.dol.gov - Department of Labor website which has a whole section on disability issues.


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Essential Skills to Getting a Job

What Young People with Disabilities Need to Know

Soft Skills: The Competitive Edge

What do employers look for in new employees? According to the 2006 report *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers’ Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce*, it may not be what some young job seekers expect. This in-depth survey of 461 business leaders conducted by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and Society for Human Resource Management reveals that while the three "R’s" (reading, writing, and arithmetic) are still fundamental to every employee’s ability to do the job, employers view "soft" skills as even more important to work readiness. The report also finds that younger workers frequently lack these skills, which include:

- Professionalism or work ethic
- Oral and written communication
- Teamwork and collaboration skills
- Critical thinking or problem-solving skills

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) discussed the importance of such skills with the Circle of Champions, a distinguished group of U.S. businesses that have received the Secretary of Labor’s New Freedom Initiative Award for innovative and proactive efforts to recruit, hire, and promote people with disabilities. As part of this dialogue, the companies identified the following competencies as key to the success of young workers in the 21st Century workplace.

Work Ethic, Communication, & Problem-Solving
Networking
Simply put, networking involves talking with friends, family members, and acquaintances about your employment goals, interests, and desires. It also involves reaching out beyond people you already know in order to expand the opportunities that may be available to you. When it comes to finding a job, networking is essential. According to Cornell University’s Career Center, 80 percent of available jobs are not advertised. Therefore, if you are not connecting with other people, you are likely to miss out on many job opportunities.

To start networking, make a list of everyone who may be able to help you job search. Next, talk to people on the list and tell them that you are looking for employment. Ask if they know of any openings and to introduce you if they do. But don’t stop with the names on your list. Talk to cashiers, barbers, clergy, and anyone else you meet about their work and ask if they know of any jobs that match your interests. It is also essential to follow up with those with whom you have networked. Talking with a person once will only provide leads available at that point in time. But by establishing an ongoing relationship, you may learn of other opportunities as they arise.

Once you find a job, it is important to continue to network effectively. Through ongoing networking you can develop relationships with colleagues and increase your ability to move up in the organization.

Enthusiasm
Enthusiasm is also essential to success. When interviewing, you are likely to stand out in an employer’s mind if you show excitement about the job. Prior to the interview, check out the company’s Web site to learn about the business. Think of questions you might want answered, because asking questions is one way to show interest. Other strategies include arriving a few minutes early to the interview, dressing professionally, and staying engaged in the conversation. You should also bring a pad and pen so you can take notes during the interview; just make sure to ask if it is okay to take notes first. This shows the interviewer that you are actively engaged and paying close attention to what they are saying.

It may also make it easier for you to think of additional questions to ask prior to accepting a job offer.

Once employed, continue to demonstrate enthusiasm by taking initiative and seeking new and more challenging work. In some work settings, this may mean performing tasks needing to be done before being asked. In a restaurant, for instance, in between meal rushes, a server might show initiative by wiping off dirty menus or filling salt and pepper shakers. In other work settings, you can show initiative by volunteering to take on needed work or pitching a new project idea to your supervisor. If he or she likes the idea, offer to do more research and follow up with him or her. This provides you with some ownership of the project and shows your commitment to the company.

Professionalism
Make sure your resume is “dressed to impress.” Having an organized resume is essential to making a positive first impression. A good tip is to have a college professor or a career counselor read your resume and recommend edits before you submit it to a potential employer.

Once you have been called for an interview, it is important to research the company and find out more about your potential job responsibilities. This will not only allow you to ask better questions during your interview, but also ensure you are well-informed should the company make you an offer.

Business etiquette and work ethic go hand in hand for employers. Some tips when it comes to making a good impression once employed include:

- Dressing properly for the work setting
- Arriving on time and staying productive until you leave
- Turning cell phone ringers off while at work and returning phone calls and text messages while on breaks or after work hours
- Using computers, if you have access to them, only for work-related tasks
- Speaking in a respectful manner with supervisors, peers, and customers or clients

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Also remember that even when you are technically “off-duty” in the lunchroom or at a reception, you are representing the organization and are expected to act professionally. Don’t contribute to office gossip or banter around too much with your co-workers. Although you are allowed to have fun and enjoy your job, you are still there to work.

**Communication Skills**

Communicating ideas in the workplace is different than in an academic setting. In a classroom, the instructor usually leads group discussions or assigns written homework, and students respond or ask questions when directed to do so. In the workplace, however, the format for interaction varies. Sometimes your supervisors may specifically ask you for your opinion or ask you to express that opinion in writing. More often than not, however, they assume that if they need to know something, you will bring it to their attention. The challenge of communicating in the workplace is learning how and when to share your ideas or concerns.

If you need to tell your supervisor about something that is not going well, it is important to remember that both timing and your attitude are extremely important. For example, if you are a cashier at a carry-out restaurant and the long lines during the lunch rush “stress you out,” causing you to give customers incorrect change, it is best to wait to talk to your supervisor about the problem during a slower period. At an appropriate time, you may want to ask if it would be possible to have someone assist you during busy periods. And if you are able to explain that this would not only allow you to make fewer mistakes, but also allow the business to provide better service by making the line move more quickly, he or she will be more likely to take your ideas seriously. Another proactive strategy would be to talk to your supervisor or another senior employee about how you could do your job more efficiently.

Listening is also an important communication skill. Employers report that the average entry-level candidate struggles with knowing how to listen carefully. They may not immediately process essential instructions or be able to understand how their tasks relate to the overall goals of the organization. One way to improve your listening comprehension skills is to ask questions. Other tactics include restating what you thought you heard to confirm you understood correctly, and taking notes.

**Teamwork**

Successful businesses rely on team players. This skill is so important that an article in a Society for Human Resource Management magazine encourages employers to include teamwork as part of the performance appraisal process if collaboration is essential to the job. Understanding how to act as a member of a team may begin when you play sports or work on group projects in school. In the workplace, knowing how and when to lead and follow takes practice, as does knowing how to avoid unnecessary conflict. Working on a team also allows you to build closer relationships with your co-workers, which can make any job more fun and interesting. When working on a team, make sure that the workload is shared and that everyone is communicating. While some competition between team members is healthy and contributes to productivity, too much negative personal interaction can have the opposite effect.

**Problem Solving and Critical Thinking**

Problem solving and critical thinking refers to the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve workplace problems. As a new employee, you may question why an organization follows certain steps to complete a task. It may seem to you that one of the steps could be eliminated saving time, effort, and money. But you may be hesitant to voice your opinion. Don’t be; employers are usually appreciative when new employees are able to offer insight and fresh perspective into better and more efficient ways of doing things. It is important to remember, however, that as someone new to the organization, you may not always have the full picture, and thus there may be factors you are unaware of that dictate that things be done a particular way. Another important thing to remember is that when you are tasked with solving a problem, you don’t always need to answer immediately. The ability to develop a well thought out solution within a reasonable time frame, however, is a skill employers value greatly.
Resources

The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html This publication, designed for youth and the adults who work with them, helps young people make informed decisions about whether or not to disclose their disability and understand how that decision may impact their education, employment, and social outcomes.

Improving Demand-Driven Services and Performance: Toolkit For Effective Front-line Services to Youth
http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/Toolkit-improve.cfm This toolkit contains numerous worksheets to assist youth in figuring out how to address their career goals and to develop soft skills.

MonsterTRAK: Measure Your Soft Skills Smarts
http://content.monstertrak.monster.com/resources/archive/jobhunt/softskills/ This Web site contains a short self-assessment youth can use to rate their soft skills.

National Youth Leadership Network
http://www.nyln.org The National Youth Leadership Network is a youth-led organization creating opportunities for youth with disabilities to gain leadership skills and network with each other.

Social Skills: Finding Friends and Persuading People
http://www.addresources.org/article_social_skills_brown.php?menu_off=true This document, geared to young people, provides useful strategies for developing the soft skills needed in the workplace.

Youth, Disclosure, and the Workplace: Why, When, What, and How
http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/ydw.htm This fact sheet targeting young people with disabilities provides information about disclosure in the workplace.

Youth Information, Training and Resource Centers
http://www.addyic.org Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families and Administration on Developmental Disabilities, these resource centers work to increase the ability of individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise greater choice and self-determination and engage in leadership activities in their communities.

Youthwork Information Brief No. 20: Work Readiness Skills
http://ohioworkforce411.gov/docs/youth/info-brief20-WorkReadinessSkills.pdf Sponsored by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, this information brief describes soft skills that youth need and employers are looking for to gain a competitive advantage.

References

