

# Job Search Strategies

Know Your Criteria • Plan & Implement • Land a Job!

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## Job Searching 101

Job searching can feel overwhelming, but with the right strategy and consistent effort, success is within reach. Your job search is made up of several interconnected pieces — resume, networking, interview preparation, and more. This guide walks you through each piece and arms you with modern tools, including AI-powered resources, to help you land the right opportunity.

## Your 4-Year Job Search Roadmap

The earlier you start, the better positioned you will be. Here is a year-by-year checklist to guide your journey from first-year student to employed graduate.

1st Year: Build Your Foundation	2nd Year: Explore & Experiment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keep your grades up — GPA matters to many employers</li> <li>✓ Identify subjects and activities that excite you</li> <li>✓ Join student organizations aligned with your interests</li> <li>✓ Meet with a Career Advisor to explore career paths</li> <li>✓ Start building your resume (even with limited experience)</li> <li>✓ Attend the career fair just to observe and learn</li> <li>✓ Volunteer over the summer to gain experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Balance extracurriculars while maintaining your GPA</li> <li>✓ Complete informational interviews; shadow professionals</li> <li>✓ Attend the career fair and speak directly to recruiters</li> <li>✓ Practice interview skills with a mock interview appointment</li> <li>✓ Seek guidance from professors about your future path</li> <li>✓ Apply for internships or research fellowships for the summer</li> <li>✓ Create or update your LinkedIn profile</li> </ul>
3rd Year: Build Your Brand	4th Year: Execute & Land the Job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Take on leadership roles in student organizations</li> <li>✓ Research target companies and their hiring process</li> <li>✓ Learn what interview types they use: behavioral, case, technical</li> <li>✓ Attend information sessions and employer events at UIW</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Refresh your resume and tailor it for each application</li> <li>✓ Complete a mock interview to sharpen your skills</li> <li>✓ Reach out to companies about open or upcoming positions</li> <li>✓ Network actively — online and in person</li> </ul>

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| ✓ Continuously update your resume and build your story bank    | ✓ Research salary ranges so you can negotiate confidently |
| ✓ Ask professors and supervisors for letters of recommendation | ✓ Track every application and follow up consistently      |
| ✓ Start building your professional network intentionally       | ✓ Celebrate and accept the right offer!                   |

## Job Search Planning Tips

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### 1 Define Your Criteria — Know Your VIPS

Before you search, know yourself. Understand your Values, Interests, Personality, and Skills (VIPS). Ask yourself:

- What industry do I want to work in?
- What work activities would I enjoy most day-to-day?
- What skills can I offer an employer?
- How much do I need to earn — and what is my ideal salary range?
- What are my top 5 personal qualities or strengths?
- What occupations would I be proud to hold?
- Am I open to relocation? If so, where?

#### Tools to help you discover your VIPS:

- Complete the Focus2 Career Assessment to understand how your skills, interests, and values relate to careers — contact Career Services for your access code
- Meet with a Career Advisor about possible career interest areas related to your major
- Start to define a strategy for reaching your career goals
- LinkedIn Career Explorer — helps map your skills to potential job titles

### 2 Identify Your Target Companies

Create a list of 10–20 companies you want to work for. Consider location, culture, industry, and growth potential. Research tools:

- LinkedIn Company Pages — follow companies and set job alerts
- Glassdoor — read reviews, see salaries, learn about interview processes
- Handshake — UIW's job and internship platform; updated with new postings regularly
- Business Journals — local and national industry news and employer rankings
- Company careers pages — go directly to the source for open roles

### 3 Build Your Resume & Cover Letter

Your resume is your first impression. A strong resume is clear, tailored, and accomplishment-focused. Tips:

- Use action verbs and quantify results when possible (e.g., "Managed a team of 5" or "Increased engagement by 30%")
- Tailor your resume for each application using keywords from the job description
- Limit to one page if you have less than 10 years of experience

- Have a Career Advisor review your draft — they provide feedback from an employer's perspective

#### Using AI to strengthen your resume:

- Use AI tools (such as ChatGPT or Claude) to help reword bullet points using language from the job description
- Ask AI to review your resume for clarity and consistency — but always personalize the output
- Use Jobscan or Resume Worded to check your resume against ATS (Applicant Tracking System) keyword requirements
- Never submit an AI-generated exclusive resume. AI is a tool to assist you, not rewrite your resume for you — recruiters can tell

Cover letters still matter for many employers. Personalize each one. Mention a specific project, initiative, or value of the company to show genuine interest.

## 4 Build Your Job Search Strategy

Use multiple strategies simultaneously. Do not rely solely on job boards. Research shows that 70–80% of jobs are filled through networking — the "hidden job market."

### Online Job Boards (limit to 20% of your time)

- Handshake — best for college students and recent grads; used by UIW employer partners
- LinkedIn Jobs — set up job alerts for your target roles and companies
- Indeed, ZipRecruiter, Glassdoor — broad search engines for posted openings
- USAJobs.gov — for federal government positions
- Idealist.org — for nonprofit and mission-driven careers

When applying online: always visit the company's own careers page as well. Apply directly when possible — it reduces the chance of being filtered out.

### Using AI in Your Job Search

- Use AI tools to research companies before applying or interviewing — ask for summaries of recent news, culture, competitors
- Use AI to draft and refine your cover letter, then personalize it with specific details
- Use AI to practice interview answers: paste a job description and ask for likely behavioral questions, then practice answering them
- Use LinkedIn's AI features to optimize your profile for recruiter searches
- Warning: AI can speed up your process, but authentic, specific details will always outperform generic AI output

### Networking (aim for 80% of your effort)

- Reach out to alumni via LinkedIn — UIW alumni are often willing to talk to current students
- Attend career fairs, industry events, employer panels, and information sessions
- Schedule informational interviews to learn about roles and companies — and to get referrals

- The average job seeker needs to connect with approximately 25 decision makers. If you speak with 15 contacts per week, you may reach 1 decision maker (15:1 ratio). Speaking with 2 new decision makers per week shortens a typical search to about 12 weeks.\*

\*Source: Orville Pierson, *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search*

## Your Elevator Pitch

Be ready to introduce yourself in 30–60 seconds. Your pitch should include: your name, major/field, a summary of relevant experience or strengths, and what you are looking for. Practice it until it feels natural. Career Advisors can help you refine it.

## 5 Master Your Interviews

Practice is the single most effective thing you can do to improve interview performance. According to SHRM, poor communication skills are the #1 reason candidates are rejected.

- Schedule a mock interview with a Career Advisor — wear your interview attire and treat it like the real thing
- Practice behavioral questions using the STAR method: Situation, Task, Action, Result
- Research the company thoroughly before every interview: their mission, recent news, products, and culture
- Prepare 3–5 questions to ask your interviewer — this signals genuine interest
- Send a thank-you email within 24 hours of every interview

### Using AI to prepare:

- Paste the job description into an AI tool and ask it to generate likely interview questions
- Practice your answers out loud, then ask AI for feedback on your responses
- Ask AI to help you research the company and summarize recent news or initiatives to reference in your interview

## 6 Negotiate Your Offer

Receiving an offer is exciting — but before you accept, do your research. Know your worth.

- Use Glassdoor, LinkedIn Salary, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS.gov) to benchmark compensation for your role and location
- Consider the full package: salary, benefits, PTO, remote flexibility, growth potential, and culture
- Have a clear number in mind and a reason why — "Based on my research and experience, I was hoping for X"
- Never negotiate just for the sake of it — have a rationale
- Once you accept an offer, honor it — never renege on an accepted offer
- Contact a Career Advisor if you are unsure about an offer before you respond

## Top 10 Reasons People Don't Find a Job

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*Adapted from Orville Pierson, The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search:*

1. They don't put much time or effort into job searching

2. They waste time on unproductive activities (scrolling job boards for hours)
3. They have no way of measuring their progress
4. They're not sure what kind of work they are looking for
5. They don't build a target employer list — or it's too short
6. They don't define and analyze their own personal job market
7. They have no systematic approach to their search
8. They only apply to posted openings and skip proactive outreach
9. They don't realize the search is a numbers game — or they underestimate the numbers required
10. They go it alone, without objective advice or support

## LinkedIn & Your Digital Brand

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In today's job market, your online presence is just as important as your resume. Recruiters actively search LinkedIn for candidates — even before a role is posted.

- Use a professional headshot — profiles with photos get significantly more views
- Write a compelling headline beyond just your job title — include your field, strengths, or aspiration
- Complete your About section with your career story and what you are seeking
- List all relevant experience, education, skills, certifications, and volunteer work
- Request recommendations from professors, supervisors, or colleagues
- Engage with content in your field — like, comment, and share relevant articles
- Connect with UIW alumni and Career Services staff on LinkedIn
- Set your profile to "Open to Work" to signal recruiters (you can make this visible only to recruiters)

## Resources & Tools

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Resource	Description & Link
<b>Handshake</b>	UIW's official job/internship platform — <a href="https://handshake.com">handshake.com</a>
<b>LinkedIn</b>	Professional networking, job search, and brand building — <a href="https://linkedin.com">linkedin.com</a>
<b>Glassdoor</b>	Company research, reviews, salary data — <a href="https://glassdoor.com">glassdoor.com</a>
<b>Indeed</b>	Broad job board with advanced filters — <a href="https://indeed.com">indeed.com</a>
<b>USAJobs.gov</b>	All federal government job postings — <a href="https://usajobs.gov">usajobs.gov</a>
<b>Idealist</b>	Nonprofit and mission-driven jobs — <a href="https://idealist.org">idealist.org</a>
<b>BLS Occupational Outlook</b>	Career and salary research by occupation — <a href="https://bls.gov/ooh">bls.gov/ooh</a>
<b>FOCUS 2 Career</b>	Career interests assessments — see Career Services for access code

<b>Jobscan</b>	Resume keyword optimization against job descriptions — <a href="https://www.jobscan.co">jobscan.co</a>
<b>Big Interview</b>	AI-powered interview practice platform — <a href="https://www.biginterview.com">biginterview.com</a>
<b>UIW Career Services</b>	Appointments, resources, and career fairs — <a href="https://uiw.edu/career">uiw.edu/career</a> / 210-829-3931

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## **Need Job Search Assistance?**

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Schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor: call 210-829-3931, email [careers@uiwtx.edu](mailto:careers@uiwtx.edu), or stop by Student Engagement Center Room Suite 3030.