



Canadian
Down Syndrome
Society

Société
canadienne de la
trisomie 21

Employment Planning Workbook

for people with
Down syndrome



Welcome!

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society's Employment Planning Workbook was designed to help with career exploration and uncovering your employability skills.

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Whether you are a 14 year old teenager with Down syndrome thinking about a part-time job; an 18 year old who is wondering what to do after high school or a 29 year old who is reassessing what kind of career path to follow, or anywhere in between, this workbook was built for you!

First Things First...

Spend some time thinking and talking about the reasons why people get jobs. Focus on why **YOU** want to work and what **YOUR OWN** motivations are for finding a job. Some motivations will lead to better, longer lasting and more valuable work experiences than others.

Answer **YES** or **NO** to the following questions and remember, there are no right or wrong answers!

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you want to learn valuable skills? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you want to earn your own money? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you want to keep busy and try something new? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you feel like you need to find a job because your parents want you to? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you feel you should get a job just to put on your resume or to keep your parents happy? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you want to get a job to help keep your mind active and sharp? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered **YES** to any of the questions on the previous page, it would be worthwhile to use this workbook to help you learn more about yourself and start your path to employment.



The truth is, having a job does look good on your resume. But if you really do not want to find a job, you might not learn or gain anything from that experience. Do you want to focus on your activities after school? Do you feel that having a job right now might distract you from your school work? Do you want to try life skill development courses or do some volunteer work to help gain some experience? These are important questions to ask yourself and it is okay to be unsure. But starting with this Employment Planning Workbook is a good place to begin.

We have divided this workbook into four sections. Here is a summary of what you will learn as you work through it:

Section 1:

Learn about why employment matters, what it means to have a job, who's in your network and why YOU want to have a job.

Section 2:

Time for some self-discovery by getting to know yourself, finding out what is important to you, what you like and what you don't like... which can all be important tools in finding a job that fits YOU!

Section 3:

Ready to start exploring what kinds of jobs are out there? You can start thinking about what kind of work you would like to do and the kinds of places that interest you.

Section 4:

Now that you have learned a bit about yourself, you can start thinking about what you need to get a job. You'll find information about resumes, cover letters, interviews skills and other useful tips and resources.

Before you get started, here are some common words used in this workbook:

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Job Seeker:

That's you! A person looking for a job or employment.

Example: JOB SEEKERS can come to the job fair and meet different employers.

Job Application:

Job seekers may be required to fill out an official job application form if they are interested in a job. A job application will usually ask for your personal information, education, skills and experience.

Example: I filled out a JOB APPLICATION at the grocery store that I want to work at.

Resume:

A one or two-page document that lists your education, experience, skills and achievements and is given when applying for a job.

Example: To apply for the job at the dance school, I have to give them a RESUME with my experience.

Apply:

When you let an employer know that you want a job at their workplace. Sometimes you need to fill out a job application and other times you will need to give them your resume.

Example: I will APPLY for a job at the garden centre because I like taking care of plants.

Employee:

A person that is paid money for the work they do at a workplace.

Example: I am an EMPLOYEE at the hospital.

Employer:

The person or workplace looking for a worker and who will provide money in exchange for the work that is done.

Example: I work at my neighborhood book store and they are my EMPLOYER.

Employment:

Having a job and being paid for the work you do.

Example: I want EMPLOYMENT so I can have money and something to do.

Hired:

The action of employing someone for wages.

Example: The coffee shop manager HIRED me to be a part-time worker starting next week.

Wage:

The amount of money that someone receives for working. This can be based on hourly or weekly payments.

Example: I work at the hardware store down the street and my hourly WAGE is \$15.00 per hour.

Volunteer:

A person who gives his or her time and efforts to an organization without being paid.

Example: My sister and I VOLUNTEER at the foodbank once a week, I like it because we meet lots of people and we get to help organize and pack food.

Entrepreneur or Self-Employed:

Having your own business and working for yourself as the owner.

Example: I have my own food delivery business and I am SELF EMPLOYED or I own a business, I am an ENTREPRENEUR.

Network:

People who can help you, such as family members, friends or other support people. This could also include people you know who might be able to connect you to others and find a job.

Example: My Dad and my cousin Alex are part of my NETWORK and help me with my job search.

Take your time and work through this workbook at your own pace with the help of a support person.

Take Notes!

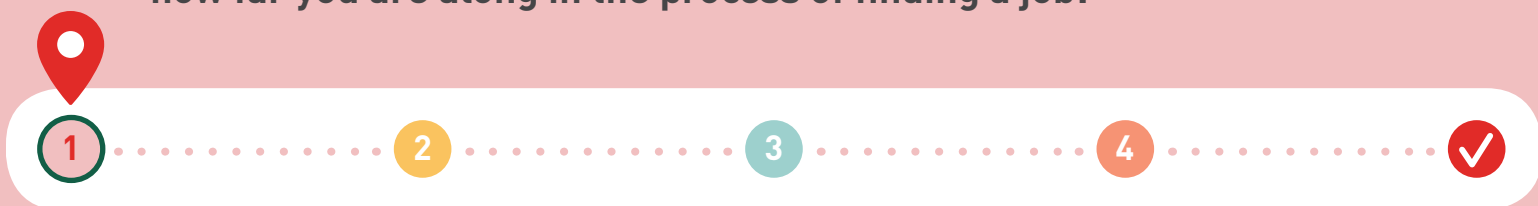
Make sure you take the time to really think about your answers. We've made sure to leave lots of room throughout the booklet to write down notes, ideas and questions in boxes like this one to the right.

Notes:

Your thoughts!
Your ideas!

Track Your Progress!

At the bottom of each page you will find a timeline like the one below to track your progress! The red marker shows how far you are along in the process of finding a job!



Check In!

Throughout the workbook you will be asked to stop and check in with yourself. There is a lot of information to go through so it can be helpful to take a break and give some ideas a little extra thought.

Let's get started!

Section 1

What it means to have a job and what things people enjoy about working.



You might be a teenager or young adult and have started to think about finding work. You might be a parent or support person and you want to start having the conversation about finding work. Whoever you are, we are glad you are using this workbook, thinking about working and preparing for the work world.

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Getting a job can be exciting but may make you feel nervous—a job will give you more independence, real-world responsibilities, and money that you earned on your own. Having a job will help you spend time out of the house, meet some people, build professional connections and make some decisions on your own.

You can choose to have a job for many different reasons like the ones below:

Independence:

This could relate to living life, decision making and doing things on your own, for yourself.

Meet new people:

You will meet many new people, develop some new friendships and learn to work with others.



Helping with routines:

You can become familiar and comfortable when you know what to expect most days. It can help build good habits and make plans for your daily activities.

Staying busy and active:

Being active each day is one of the most important things you can do for your body and your mind.

The money:

This may or may not be your main focus for working, but it certainly helps to earn some money to put in your bank account, help pay for rent or save for something special.

Part of your identity:

Many conversations start with what is your name and what do you do? Having a job can help you build your identity and lets people know who you are and what is important to you.

Teamwork, collaboration and people skills:

Working can teach you how to talk and get along with different types of people. You will work with people with different personalities, interests and attitudes, this can help you become better at working and getting along with others in the workplace.

Improve your skills:

Having a job can help you learn new skills or keep your skills updated. Various skills like typing or answering phones or staying on task are the by-product of doing the job.

Having more in your life:

You can have a job, practice your martial arts every second afternoon, attend your knitting club every evening and still spend time with family and friends. Having a job is just another part of your life.



It gives you meaning and purpose:

You might choose to work a few hours a week or you might want to work five days a week. Either way, you are taking the time to improve yourself, add value and purpose to your life and contribute to society.

Notes:



Who's in Your Network?

Creating a Network of Support

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You can work through this workbook and read it through with a friend, family member or support person who can help you. You might have questions and feel nervous which is normal. You can share your ideas and goals with them about the types of jobs you like and they can help you plan.

Think about who is in your network and fill in the following pages with their names, contact information and how they may be willing to help you.

My Network of Support

.....

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

How I know this person: _____

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

How I know this person: _____

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

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Email: _____

How I know this person: _____



Section 1

Notes:





Section 2

Self-Discovery... get to know yourself!



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What is important to you? What are your skills, interests and experiences? What do you like or don't like?



Write down your answers in the blank spaces, you can use something from the “examples” column but your answers can be as unique as you are!

QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES	YOUR ANSWERS
<p>What is important to you?</p>	<p><i>Meeting new people, being independent, being creative, helping others</i></p>	
<p>What do you like to learn about?</p>	<p><i>Drama, science, cooking, fixing things</i></p>	
<p>What are you good at?</p>	<p><i>Taking care of animals, drawing, folding laundry, making people laugh</i></p>	



QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES	YOUR ANSWERS
What are your hobbies?	<i>Building things, reading, playing sports, video games</i>	
What do you like to do in your spare time?	<i>Gardening, cooking, baking, helping in the community, making things, using a computer</i>	
What are some things you don't like to do?	<i>Counting things, cleaning, working by myself, reading</i>	
Have you volunteered or worked in the past? If so, what kind of work did you do?	<i>Helping seniors, delivering food, playing with children, helping with groceries</i>	



QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES	YOUR ANSWERS
What makes you feel good about yourself?	<i>Finishing a task, helping people, being unique, solving problems, being independent</i>	
What are some of your successes?	<i>Learning how to type on a computer keyboard, finishing high school, competing in your favourite sport</i>	
What are some of your challenges?	<i>Working with people, learning something new, understanding directions</i>	
What are some things you DO NOT want to do at a job?	<i>Working alone, sitting down all day, taking the bus/train to get to work, wearing a uniform</i>	



QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES	YOUR ANSWERS
Why do you want to work?	<i>Have independence, meet people, learn new things, to make money, get discounts at work, because my Mom said that I have to work</i>	

Notes:



What are you good at?

Think about things that you are good at. You might be good at building things from spending time in your grandfather's woodworking shop or fixing cars in the family garage. Are you an athlete, or a good babysitter or animal sitter?

Give it some thought, you might be really good at something and can share your skills and talents.





Here are some examples, but fill in the answers with what YOU are good at or what YOU love doing.

What are you good at?	Some ideas of where you can work:
<i>helping in the garden</i>	<i>garden centre, landscaping, floral shop</i>
<i>playing video games</i>	<i>gaming store</i>
<i>building things</i>	<i>tool shop, wood shop, hardware store, self-employment</i>
<i>dancing</i>	<i>dance studio helping children, front desk at a dance studio</i>



What are you good at?	Some ideas of where you can work:



What are you interested in?	Some ideas of where you can work:
<i>mountain biking</i>	<i>working at a bike park</i>
<i>reading books</i>	<i>working at the library</i>
<i>being around animals</i>	<i>pet sitter, working at a pet store or working at a farm</i>



What are you interested in?	Some ideas of where you can work:



What do you NOT LIKE?	Some places where you SHOULD NOT work:
<i>talking to customers in a busy place</i>	<i>working in a restaurant</i>
<i>working outdoors</i>	<i>landscaping</i>



**What do you
NOT LIKE?**

**Some places where you
SHOULD NOT work:**

Skills

Different people have different skills.

Some people are good at sorting things, talking to people, cleaning, sorting, cooking, solving problems, using a computer or taking the bus and train on their own.

You might have some of these skills, but it is important to write them down and see what you need to improve on.

What skills do you have?

Examples:

Friendly

Good at sorting and matching

Organized

Like to learn new things

Team Player

Computer Knowledge

Problem solver

Good listener

Independent



Need to practice or improve some of your skills?

You could get better and practice things like life skills, public transit training, time management, budgeting, independence and more.

Search!

Search the internet for key words like: hands-on life skills training, pre-employment training, job-readiness, work readiness programs, life skills programs or community living programs to help you learn the skills you need for a job.

Ask for Support!

Don't forget to ask people in your **network of support** because they can help you find the help you need.



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Section 2

Notes:

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Section 3

Job Exploration... what kind of work do you like to do?



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It's important to start thinking about the kinds of places you would like to work at.



Go through the following questions and write down your answers, this could help narrow down what kind of work you want to do.

Do you like to be outdoors or do you prefer being indoors?	
Do you like sitting or walking around? Mix of both?	
Do you like busy places like fast food restaurants or shopping malls?	
Do you like quiet places where you can focus and take your time?	



Think of places you enjoy, like your family's favourite restaurant or movie theatre or amusement park, do you think you would like working there?

What do you LIKE most about those places when you are there?

What do you NOT LIKE about those places when you are there?

Do you like working with other people or do you like working by yourself?

What are some places you do NOT like going to?



Have you volunteered before? What did you LIKE and NOT LIKE about that experience?

Do you like working with people, like customers, clients or co-workers?

Do you like to have routines and follow a plan every day?



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Take a moment to:

Think About Volunteering!

Volunteering in your community can make a difference to those in need. It is also a great opportunity to meet new people, improve your social skills and learn new skills that can be helpful when you are looking for paid work.

Check out [VolunteerCanada.ca](https://www.volunteerCanada.ca) or [CharityVillage.com](https://www.charityvillage.com) to get started or check in with your favourite community organization for volunteer opportunities!



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Job Profiles

From your list on the previous page, you can research different jobs and learn what to expect at different workplaces.

You can find hundreds of job profiles on the internet and you can learn about what employees do in certain jobs and whether your personality suits that job.

Here are some job profile websites to get you started:

Government of Canada, Explore an Occupation

<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning/search-job-profile>

Explore Occupations in Alberta

<https://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo/occupations-in-alberta/>

Work BC's Career Trek

<https://www.careertrekbc.ca/>

Information Tours

An information tour is a scheduled visit to a workplace you are interested in. You can see what the workplace is like, how busy, how large or accessible it is. You can observe people doing their work and see what a typical day might look like.



Job Shadowing

Job shadowing involves spending time with a person at work. While on the job, you'll take part in some activities and get a good idea of what's involved in that job.

You might know someone who works in your job of interest or you can reach out to the company and see if you can set up a job shadow opportunity.

Work Experience and Co-Op Programs

If you are in high school, take advantage of a Co-Op work experience program if your school has one. This will give you the opportunity to learn more about certain jobs or career paths, build your skills and get you on-the-job experience. Check with your school or your local school board.

If you are a college or university student, many campuses have co-op or work experience programs available too!

Tip!

You might know someone who works at a place that seems interesting. Have a chat, you might be able to set up a job shadowing opportunity!





Are you thinking of becoming your own boss?

Self-Employment/ Entrepreneurship

If you have a dream for a business and want to be your own boss, there are programs and supports available across the country for people who have disabilities and who want to start or grow their business.

If you have a business idea and are ready, willing and able to run your own business, check out these websites for more information:

Government of Canada:
Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program

Funding:
Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities-National Stream



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Section 3

Notes:

Section 4

Ready to start looking for a job?



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Applying for Jobs

Now that you have learned a bit about yourself, what you like and dislike about different workplaces and what your interests are, you can start thinking about what you need to get a job.

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When you come across a job that interests you, you will be asked to fill out a job application or submit a resume. Employers will ask that job seekers apply so that they can find the best person for the job.

Make sure that all the information you write on the job application is correct and honest. The job application will ask you for your personal information, education, training, work and volunteer experiences.

On the next page is an example of a job application.

Tip!

You can ask someone that is part of your ***network of support*** for help when filling out the job application.

Application for Employment

Position You Are Applying For _____

Desired Salary _____

Date Available for Work: _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name			First Name			Middle		
Address				City		Province		Postal Code
Home Phone: _____			Cell Phone: _____			Email address: _____		
Are you a Canadian Citizen? [] Yes [] No								
Have you ever been convicted of a felony? [] Yes [] No								
If selected for employment are you willing to submit to a pre-employment drug screening test? [] Yes [] No								

EDUCATION

School Name	Location	Years Attended	Degree Received	Major

Other training, certifications or licenses held: _____

EMPLOYMENT

Employer: _____	Dates Employed: _____
Work Phone: _____	Pay Rate: \$ _____ to _____
Address: _____	
City: _____	Province _____ Postal Code _____
Position: _____	
Duties Performed: _____	
Supervisors Name and Title: _____	
Reason for leaving: _____	
May we contact them? [] Yes [] No	

REFERENCES

Name	Title	Company	Phone

Acknowledgement and Authorization

- I certify that all answers given herein are true and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- I authorize investigation of all statements contained in this application for employment as may be necessary in arriving at an employment decision.
- In the event of employment, I understand that false or misleading information given in my application or interview(s) may result in discharge.

Signature of Applicant _____ Date _____

Cover Letter

A cover letter is submitted with your resume when you are applying for a job.

It is a short, one-page letter that says who you are and why you are applying for a particular job.

It will also include some details about what you are good at, like managing your time or counting or being friendly and other experiences that would be useful for that job.

In the cover letter, let the employer know how interested you are to meet them for an interview and don't forget to include your contact information so they can get in contact with you.



Resumes

A resume is a one or two-page summary of your skills, education, training, past job and volunteer experiences. It is given to an employer when you are interested in a job.

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To help the employer understand who you are, you can include courses that you have completed like baking or life skill classes, certificates and other accomplishments.

You can include things you are interested in like your hobbies or sports you are involved in.

Include things that you are good at and your best qualities like being a hard worker, sorting things, working on your own, being on time or being good at counting things.

On the next page is an example of a simple resume, there are many samples on the internet as well!



Martin Strauss

Waiter

Phone 516-849-0716

LinkedIn [linkedin.com/in/martinqstrauss](https://www.linkedin.com/in/martinqstrauss)

E-mail martinqstrauss@gmail.com

Hard-working waiter, seeking to use proven customer service skills to foster dining excellence at Last Unicorn Restaurant. Commended 5x by management at Devin Shiro's Country Club and St. Ann's Soup Kitchen. Eagle Scout. Received Beacon of Hope Award.

Experience

2017 - 2018

Food Server

Devin Shiro's Country Club

- Served food to diners at busy banquets approximately once a month.
- Bussed tables.
- Served drinks.

2016 - 2018

Volunteer Food Server

St. Ann's Soup Kitchen

- Served diners in a high-volume soup kitchen.
- Commended by management for taking on thankless duties.
- Pitched in with food prep when needed.

Education

2014 - 2018

Central Islip High School, NY

- Excel on Debate Team.
- President of Yearbook Board.
- Studied abroad in Spain, Spring Semester 2017.

Additional Activities

- Volunteer monthly to walk dogs at Islip Animal Shelter
- Avid kayaker, pay for and maintain my own gear
- Help parents with yard work approximately 150 hrs/yr

Award

2017

Received Beacon of Hope Award for exemplary community service

Certification

First Aid and CPR - American Red Cross

Eagle Scout - Boy Scouts of America

Achieved Eagle Rank in October of 2017

Eagle Scout Project: "Food for the Homeless" event fed 40 people

Soft Skills

Strong Work Ethic



Teamwork



References

When you apply for a job, sometimes the employer will ask for a list of references. These are people who can talk about your work experience, work habits, skills and your personality.

A reference can be a past employer, teacher, someone you have volunteered for or with, support worker and many others, as long as they can provide you with a positive reference.

Remember to choose your references carefully.

Do not include family members as references.

Ask permission to use someone as a reference before you give their information.

When you are being considered for a job, the employer may ask you to provide your list of personal and professional references who they can contact to find out more about you. It is common for an employer to ask for **three** different references.





Check In!

There is a lot of work that you need to do at this point. Building your resume, cover letter and reference lists take time and help from other people. Remember to use correct information when doing these important documents.

You will have to add, change or redo your resume and cover letters for different jobs. As you gain more experience, you will have to update these documents, make sure to save them on your computer!

Notes:





Should you mention your disability or that you have Down syndrome?

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It is completely up to you!

You can tell the employer about your disability in your cover letter, on your resume, before or during an interview or not tell them at all, it is entirely your choice.



Where to Look

There are many types of jobs and ways to find a job. You can search through online job boards, talk to family and friends, contact an employment service agency, attend career fairs or you could even apply for a job ad that you see in the window of a store down the street.

Here are some popular Canadian Youth Job Search websites:

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[Canadayouthworks.ca](#)

Canada's national youth employment job board

[Government of Canada Job Bank](#)

Find jobs for young Canadians

[Youthjobscanada.ca](#)

For youths ages 15-24 who are looking for volunteer and work experience



Interviews

What is an interview?

An interview is when the employer wants to meet you and ask you questions. This will help them understand if you will be a good fit for the job and if they should hire you. An interview could happen in person, over the phone or during a video call. Sometimes there is more than one person who is interviewing you.

So, you've found a job you are interested in, given your cover letter and resume and the employer has called you to set up a job interview for next week, good job!

But the work is not over, there are many things you can do to get ready for the interview and hopefully get that job!

1. Confirm the address, the time and who you are meeting with—know where you are going and how to get there on time, consider practicing the route there, especially if it involves transit to an area you are not familiar with.
2. Do you need more time to answer questions? Do you need a support person with you? Do you need to have the information in plain language? Consider letting the employer know if you need anything before the interview.
3. Find out more about the workplace and the job—knowing some things about the company's history or who started the business is a great way to impress the interviewer and be a stand-out candidate for the job.

Tip!

Write down some questions you could ask the interviewer at the end.



Interview Practice

There are many questions that an interviewer can ask you so it is important to practice!

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Practice by pretending you are at an interview. Shake hands, greet them, have a seat across from your friend, parent or support person while they ask you some questions. It's good to practice by pretending - this helps you get ready for the real thing!

On the next page are some common interview questions to practice answering. When answering these questions, also share some examples of when you were in that situation and how you dealt with it.

Tip!

Smile, say hello and give a good handshake. Make sure your handshake is firm with one or two pumps. You can practice this at home with a parent, sibling, friend or support worker!

Check out this [how-to video!](#)



1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

This is usually one of the first questions and most of this information is found on the cover letter, resume or application you gave them. But they want to know and understand what you have done in the past and why.

Remember not to give too much information, don't talk about where you were born and who your grade two teacher was, only give information that will help them understand why you are a good fit for the job.

2. What are your biggest weaknesses? or What are you not so good at?

You can answer this by choosing an actual weakness, but one that you are improving on.

For example: I am not good at being on time, but I just got a watch and I use my phone to help alert me when I have to keep track of my time.

3. What are your biggest strengths? or What are you good at?

Are you great at sorting things? Maybe you are really good at talking to people or building things, make sure to share something that is useful to that workplace and the job you are applying for.

For example: I am good at talking to people and being friendly is my strength. I can do good at this job because I can help greet people at the front desk and help them feel welcome at the office.

Tip!

Practice answering common interview questions with a friend or family member ahead of time. This can help you calm your nerves by knowing what to expect. It will be easier to answer questions at the interview if you have practiced.



4. Why should we hire you?

This is when you could talk about your skills and the things that you are good at that would be useful for that job.

For example: I am a friendly, smart person and I like to learn new things. I have always helped in my mom's garden and feel that I could be a good employee at your garden centre.

5. Tell me about a time when a co-worker, customer or other person was angry or frustrated. What did you do?

These are questions that help the interviewer understand how you deal with tough situations. Think of examples, use them, but make sure to show how you fixed it and how you learned from the experience.

For example: At my volunteer job, we help put food in boxes for people who come to the foodbank. Another volunteer got angry about something, so I offered to help her by packing her boxes so she could take a break before we had to start the next packages. She came back from her break, was very thankful for my help and she helped me clean up my station at the end of the shift.

Tip!

If you do not understand what the interviewer is asking, you could ask them to simplify the question to help you understand.



On the day of the interview...

Make a good impression.

Take the time to choose clean, ironed and appropriate clothing and shoes. Make sure your hair, face and makeup are neat and tidy.

Be early.

Arriving 15 minutes before the interview is plenty. Turn off your cell phone and don't look at it.

Be prepared.

Greet the interviewer, smile and shake their hand, just like you practiced.

Relax.

Listen to the questions and take your time. If you don't understand the questions, don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you are unsure.

Give examples.

Be honest with your answers and be yourself!

At the end of the interview, thank them for their time and tell them that you look forward to hearing from them soon.





10 Interview Tips:

1. Prepare
2. Plan Ahead
3. Practice
4. Dress Appropriately
5. No Distractions
6. Don't Be Late
7. Be Friendly and Smile
8. Listen Carefully
9. Follow-up After the Interview
10. Don't Give Up!





Section 3

Notes:

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Congratulations!

Good job on all your hard work in sections 1–4! Deciding to prepare for the work world and looking for a job is a big step. You should feel proud of yourself for investing time and energy into planning for your future! High Five!



1

2

3

4



Looking for more guidance?

This workbook was designed to help you start learning about yourself, introduce you to uncovering your employability skills and start building the pieces you need to get a job. You might revisit this workbook and learn something new about yourself, or you might be ready for the next steps with the more detailed Employment Planning Hub on the CDSS website to get and keep that meaningful job!

[CDSS Employment Planning Hub](#)

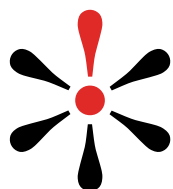
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