



Time Management Tips for Job Seekers

“The bad news is time flies. The good news is you’re the pilot.” — Michael Altshuler

Failing to plan is planning to fail.

Often overlooked by job seekers, time management skills are an integral part of career success and affect all aspects of the job search process. Effective time management enables you to meet application deadlines; arrive on schedule for an interview; allot sufficient time for reference requests; plan your job application follow-up. Plus, time management is a valuable transferable skill. For example, time-thrifty job seekers might practice their elevator speech in preparation for an upcoming career fair—or chance introduction to an employer—while commuting to class. Timing may be “everything,” but managing time effectively can make or break your job search.

Set a tempo, keep the rhythm

Psychology Today defines time management as “the ability to plan and control how you spend the hours in your day to effectively accomplish your goals.” In the workplace, it’s prioritizing tasks within working hours for maximized productivity. However, time management skills are equally important when *looking* for work, especially since the search is often described as a full-time job in itself. When you’re not employed, staying motivated to continue your search can be a challenge, particularly when you’ve been at it for some time.

Without a clearly defined “9-to-5” job, it’s likely your day is unstructured and unfocused. Here’s where you need to establish and get in the habit of following a routine. Being disciplined will enable you to focus on a known set of tasks. Set up a daily job search schedule similar to that of a 9-to-5 job. Get up every morning, shower, and get ready to “work” on your job search by 9:00 a.m. Spend mornings looking on job boards and researching companies. Spend afternoons following up on jobs or reaching out to connections for networking opportunities. Your job is to *get* a job. Give yourself a list of several tasks that you want to accomplish for the day—and complete them!

Time stops for no one

Don’t delay. In today’s competitive job market open positions are filled quickly. So, submit all required job application materials as soon as

possible after seeing the posted position, and tailor your résumé to the opportunity. Use a calendar to set reminders for yourself. Once you see an open position, write a deadline in your calendar that the application is due 1–2 days later. If you apply for a job, set a reminder to follow up on the position in 1–2 weeks.

Value other people’s time

Respect the time that others give to assist with your job search. When asking for referrals, don’t demand or rush—you’re requesting a favor. Professors can be busy, personal contacts have lives. And don’t keep employers waiting—either for an interview or even after you’ve been hired. Don’t be fired for not keeping pace with the company culture.

Be in sync with the industry

Working professionals adhere to a fast-paced timeline and will expect you to be on the same schedule. Most professionals respond to emails and phone calls within a day. If a recruiter or company contacts you regarding an open position, reply within 24 hours. Do the same when asked to submit your résumé for a job. Any longer to reply indicates that you might not be excited in the role. If over a day has passed before you reply, do still submit a response and apologize for the delay.

Don’t skip a beat

Arrive 10-15 minutes early for a job interview; more than 15-20 minutes early can appear unprofessional. Also, send a thank you note to your interviewer within 24 hours, but take time first to digest your thoughts. More important, cut out distractions and avoid procrastinating on priorities. Persevere, but give yourself permission to take breaks. And be flexible. Every job seeker has the same 24 hours. How will you spend yours?



i n a nutshell:

Effective time management keeps your job search running smoothly like clockwork with fewer hiccups:

- **Set clear goals, define the necessary steps, and monitor your progress**
- **Keeping pace reflects on your professionalism and interest in the role**
- **Prioritize your to-do list: focus on and finish designated tasks**
- **Don’t wait until the last minute to request a reference**
- **Be proactive and accountable for your own success**
- **See the big picture, plan for the unexpected**

A job search can feel like a huge undertaking. But, as the saying goes, “How do you eat an elephant?” Answer: One bite at a time.