

# GETTING EXPERIENCE: JOB TIPS FOR TEENS

A [Michigan Jobs & Career Portal](#) service

## KNOW YOUR TALENTS

The first step in finding a job is identifying your interests, skills and abilities. Although finding a job that meets your financial needs is important, emphasis should also be placed on enjoying the work and having the ability and skills to perform the tasks expected of you.

### Identify Your Interests

- Explore careers. [The Michigan Occupational Information System's \(MOIS\)](#) Structured Search helps you identify your interests and the Occupational Files help you see how those interests relate to careers with favorable employment outlooks.
- TESTS HELP! Vocational evaluation and aptitude tests are designed to measure your possession of, or potential to acquire, job skills and knowledge.
- See your school counselor or visit your nearest [Michigan Works!](#) Office for testing and MOIS Structured Search.

### Focus on Education

- School work counts! Many young workers cannot compete for available jobs because they lack simple reading and math skills. It may not be your fault if you did not learn basic skills, but it will be your fault if you don't make the effort now to obtain them. Take remedial classes - get your GED - it will pay off later.
- Choose your classes carefully. Even if you plan to go to a college or university, if you don't take the proper courses, you may limit the types of postsecondary programs you can enter and, therefore, narrow your employment choices in the future. It is a good idea to call the colleges to find out high school prerequisites for your major course of study.
- A solid education and marketable skills are the most important factors for getting a job that pays well. Your opportunities for future employment should be planned for now.

### Get Involved

- Extracurricular activities can give you job-related experiences. Typing, filing, answering the phone in the attendance office, or being club treasurer with light bookkeeping duties, will teach you marketable skills.
- [Volunteer](#) work experience is a great way to prepare for future employment. In addition to helping people who need help, you can:
  - Get on-the-job training for future employment or college applications
  - Sample possible career areas
  - Get references
  - Get hired. Many volunteers get hired by the agencies they served for free
- Consider seeking a different type of job each summer to learn details about different jobs or occupations before you decide on a career goal.

## Seek Help

- Your school counselor, and [Michigan Works!](#) staff can help you explore your options and identify your potential.
- School counselors and teachers can help you make wise career planning decisions, and plan and conduct a job search.
- [Michigan Works!](#) interviewers and counselors are trained to assist young workers who have special employment problems such as limited job skills and brief work histories. They can also refer youth directly to employers, training programs such as Job corps and the Michigan Youth Corp, and other government sponsored youth employment and job training programs.
- Talk with people who do the kind of work you want to do. Call employers in the industry that interests you. Ask to schedule an interview and/or tour of their facilities. This is a good way to get inside information about job duties, working conditions, training requirements and job entry from someone who has been through it before. Also, ask what they do not like about the job and try to observe them while they work.
- Don't forget to discuss your job search and career plans with your family. Their financial and other support will be needed.

## GET YOUR JOB SEARCH TOOLS TOGETHER

### Work Authorization

- Social Security Numbers are required for all employees. If you do not have one, check your local telephone directory for the [Social Security](#) office nearest you.
- Work Permits may be required for 14-17 year old workers for specific jobs. (Those who are exempt from the Youth Employment Standards Act must provide verification for the employer.) Some exceptions include:
  - 17-year-olds who have passed the GED examination
  - High school graduates
  - Youth who are married or are no longer the legal responsibility of their parents or legal guardians. (A court order statement must be obtained to verify your independence.)
- Forms to apply for work permits may be obtained from most local school district administrative offices.
- Health Permits (food handler's permits) may be required for workers who will handle foods in an establishment. Apply at your county health clinic. You may be given a tuberculin (TB) test or chest x-ray. Parental consent is required.

### Applications & Resumes

A **resume** (pronounced "Re-zoo-may") is **one(1)** type written page which summarizes your education, work history and other qualifications.

- References may be requested by the employer (at least three, but no relatives). They should be people who know your abilities such as teachers, former employers,

and other adults. Be sure you ask permission to use their names. Write out the correct spelling of their name, address, and phone number.

- Applications, resumes, and cover letters are written communications that represent you to the employer. Be certain they are complete, accurate, and legible. They should sell you to the employer and tell why you are the best qualified person for the job.
- The school or public library career resource centers as well as Internet web sites have information on "how to" write resumes and cover letters, answer difficult questions in interviews, and other information about getting the skills necessary to convince employers to hire you.
  - Visit the [Michigan Jobs and Career Portal Resume & Cover Letter Help](#) section for more resources to help you write your first resume.

## KNOW THE LAW

The hours of work and the types of job suitable for teenagers (14 to 17- year-olds) are governed by the [Youth Employment Standards Act](#). Employers that hire nationally, such as retailers and fast food stores, must abide by the stricter federal laws. State laws are usually more lenient.

Some of the Michigan laws include:

- Teenagers may not work during school hours, except in co-op, work- study, or internship programs.
- Combined hours of school and work cannot exceed 48 hours.
- The teenager may not work more than 6 days a week.
- 14 and 15-year-olds may not work after 9:00 p.m. or before 7:00a.m.
- Legally, you are not required to work on days of your religious observance. (However, the employer's needs will determine who will get the job.)
- You should also be aware that some job application and interview questions, as well as some employment practices, are illegal. Your school counselor or [Michigan Works!](#) staff can advise you or refer you the appropriate agency, if applicable.

For more information on teen employment in Michigan, refer to the Michigan Wage & Hour Division's [Youth Employment Standards](#)

## FIND THE JOB

- Finding a job is a job. Plan your job hunt, and then work your plan until you're hired.
- When possible, try to find work that gives you experience related to your career goals.
- Let everyone know you want a job; friends, family, neighbors, past employers, teachers, counselors, and others. This is known as "networking" and is the method of filling most jobs. Employers may hire referrals from their current employees

before they advertise job openings. Give each person who is assisting you a copy of your resume, so that they know your job target and can speak knowledgeably about your abilities to potential employers.

- Some sources of job leads can include:
  - [Michigan Talent Bank](#)
  - [Michigan Works!](#)
  - [Internet on-line employment services Web sites](#)
  - School Placement offices
  - Work-study, co-op and internship programs
  - [Temporary agencies](#)
  - [Summer and part-time jobs](#)
  - Friends, family, and neighbors
  - Community organizations and clubs
  - Newspaper articles and want ads
  - "Help Wanted" signs in store windows or bulletin boards
- Be realistic about the salary, days and hours, and position you expect.
- Many "first" jobs are in the fast foods or other retail sales industries which usually pay minimum wage or slightly above. Also, they frequently require evening and weekend work. You may receive periodic raises or better working hours as you prove your ability to perform the job well.
- Dependable transportation is a must! Some good jobs may not be near your own neighborhood. Allow enough time to be punctual by commuter bus or make other reliable arrangements in advance.
- Don't worry if you have never had a job for wages. Everyone had to find that first job.
- Many employers are willing to hire young workers who lack job-related experience and skills, but you must have a positive attitude. You must be able to convince employers that you are sincerely interested in the job and that you can learn the job duties quickly and accurately.

## WHEN YOU GET AN INTERVIEW

You only have one chance to make that first impression!

- Dress neatly and cleanly in a style appropriate for the job you are after
- Bring your resume or a fact sheet listing your education, experience, social security number, and references
- Go alone!
- Be on time or a little early
- Be courteous and polite to everyone you meet

- Be prepared to discuss your qualifications in terms of the employer's needs, not your own
- Review and study possible interview questions and do mock interviews

Some employers administer tests as a means to identify qualified applicants. Practice your reading and comprehension, math, typing, and other skills beforehand. Learn to relax in order to do your best at test time.

## EVALUATE YOUR INTERVIEWS

- Keep a record of all companies and the dates you applied for work, sent a resume, interviewed, and followed-up after your interview.
- You may not get the job where you first apply. Learn to take rejection without being discouraged. Review and analyze the results after each interview so you can do better on your next try. Keep trying until you get a job that suits you.
- Have a thank you letter prepared in advance, so that you can mail it soon after the interview