

# Making Use of the Web in Your Job Search

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In a little over a decade, the Internet has completely transformed our lives, including the way many of us search for jobs. If you're able to create a résumé using word-processing software, to use a Web browser and to send and receive e-mail, you may want to use the Internet in your job search. This article assumes you have at least those basic skills. If you also know how to create a Web page or have someone who can do it for you, that's even better.

To help you determine how best to use the Internet in your job search, consider the following:

- the importance of Internet knowledge in the job I am seeking
- the skills and knowledge I need to make the best use of the Internet in my search
- the appropriate résumé format to use on the Web
- the best way to use the Internet to find and target the perfect employer

## What You Need to Know

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### **Will I be able to find a good job even though my Internet skills are pretty basic?**

This depends on the type of the job you are looking for. Many jobs today require some knowledge of how to use the Internet. A graphic artist who is looking for a job creating Web pages has to know how to use the Internet. On the other hand, it may not matter whether a chef, a musician, or an accountant knows how to use it.

### **I am looking for a high-tech job. Can I do my entire search on the Web?**

You may be able to do everything on the Web, but some employers prefer a mix of high-tech and traditional methods. For example, you can submit your résumé by e-mail, but you may also be asked to send a copy on quality paper by ordinary mail.

## What to Do

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### **Be Clear about Your Goals in Terms of a Job and the Kind of Organization You Want to Work For**

If you plan to look for a job using the Internet, you need to have already decided what you want to do, identified your marketable skills, and created a winning résumé. The Web is a huge resource, and if you are not completely clear about what you want, you could waste many hours—if not days—searching aimlessly. A key thing to think about in any job search today is the importance of Internet knowledge and skills, especially if your goal is to work in a high-tech organization. The way you go about your job search can be a good demonstration of your ability to use the Internet, particularly in the way you present your résumé.

### **Decide on the Electronic Format or Formats for Your Résumé**

The following is a summary of the types of electronic formats in which you might be asked to submit your résumé:

- as a scannable résumé, typed in a traditional font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, that is easily recognized by an optical character reader (OCR). Do not use bold or italics. It is strongly suggested that you include keywords related to the job position and to your field of expertise throughout the résumé. Do not use bold or italics. It is strongly suggested that you include keywords related to the job position and to your field of expertise throughout the résumé;
- as a text format résumé, attached to an e-mail, or included in the body of an e-mail, which any word processor can read. It loses all formatting but is easy to send quickly to a potential employer;
- as a Web-based résumé, a nontraditional résumé that you post on your Web site, typically broken up into its components—work experience, specialized skills, education, and references. Each of these could have its own page of content;
- as a CD-ROM résumé, burned onto a compact disk and, typically incorporating a multimedia presentation of your skills and qualifications.

If you need to learn how to prepare any of these formats, consult the resources at the end of this article. Then contact potential employers to find out which they would prefer to receive. Generally, a high-tech organization will ask you to submit one of the more high-tech résumés.

### **Search the Web for Potential Employers and Gather Information**

You can find a gold mine of employment information on the Web using a search engine such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) or one of the employment databases listed below. But first narrow

your search by listing your personal job requirements. Employment databases generally organize their data by the type of business activity, the size of the organization, and its location. If you drill down through these categories, you can eliminate large numbers of potential employers very quickly. Once you have found the organizations with jobs that meet your requirements, you can visit their Web sites to screen even further. Their Web sites can be found either in the employment database or by using a search engine.

## Track Your Progress

Once you have decided which organizations you are interested in, set up a database to track the information you gather about each and the actions you take related to each, for example, when you sent letters and résumés, which type of résumé you sent, the responses you got, phone calls you made, and who you spoke to and what you discussed.

## Network Using the Internet

E-mail is one of the easiest and most effective ways to use the Internet for networking. You can e-mail contacts within your industry to learn about trends, potential job openings, or for the names of specific contacts within an organization. Other possible ways to use the Web for networking include:

- *e-mail lists or listservs*—a technology that allows you to send simple e-mails to a large number of people. All e-mails and responses are seen by everyone registered on the list. This is useful for asking questions about what is happening in a particular field or industry, or to get information about an organization. However, you may want to participate as an observer for a couple weeks to get an idea of what is acceptable before you post any messages of your own. Most listservs do not encourage direct job searches;
- *newsgroups or USENET*—which focus on a particular field and/or location. You will need to visit the Web site to see what information is posted before you can reply. Use one of the search engines to locate a newsgroup that encourages job seeking and job posting or visit [www.availablejobs.com/newsgroups](http://www.availablejobs.com/newsgroups) for access to many newsgroups;
- *chat rooms*—an excellent way to network in real time. Chat rooms are Web sites on which several people use text messages to communicate interactively. People who participate in chat rooms based on your interests will likely be able to provide you with valuable information and potential leads.

## **Create Your Own Web Page**

You no longer have to be a “techie” to create your own Web page. Most major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer free or inexpensive Web pages to their subscribers. However, if yours does not, you can quickly and easily set up a free Web page on [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com) by using simple templates and adding your own text. You can include your photo, résumé, samples of your work, and any articles you may have written for professional journals. You may also want to purchase your own domain name ([www.nsi.com](http://www.nsi.com)). A domain name allows you to create a more elaborate Web site that includes multimedia—video, audio, art, photos—and anything else that you think will showcase your skills and abilities. A domain name can be especially important to a high-tech organization or to one looking for an especially creative person in the arts or advertising, for example. A domain name also allows people to find you more easily on the Web.

Make sure you put your e-mail address and Web site address on all correspondence, in e-mail signatures, and on your business cards.

## **What to Avoid**

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### **You Have No Clear Goal and Plan**

If you find yourself wandering aimlessly around cyberspace, it probably means you have not taken the time to clearly define your career goals. The Web can be overwhelming to job hunters who have not done their homework, and many go back to searching the newspaper’s classified ads. Only a small percentage of job openings are listed in the classifieds. The Internet is where it is happening today. If you are having a hard time narrowing your focus, you might want to ask a career consultant to help you.

### **Your Approach on the Web is Too Casual**

People commonly interact on the Web in an offhand way, using abbreviations and ignoring typos and misspellings. If you are job hunting, however, you cannot risk being that casual. Hundreds of thousands of people may see your online communications, including, you hope, the people in organizations seeking employees, and they will be looking for someone who communicates in a professional manner.

## Where to Learn More

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### **Web Sites:**

American Business Lists at infoUSA.com: [www.lookupusa.com](http://www.lookupusa.com)

Available Jobs: [ww.availablejobs.com/newsgroupsw](http://ww.availablejobs.com/newsgroupsw)

Hoover's (company information): [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)

True Careers (a list of prominent employers in a specific city or area): [www.truecareers.com](http://www.truecareers.com)