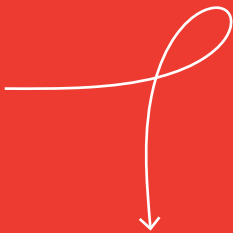




UNITED WAY
Central Iowa

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TOOLKIT

Youth



WELCOME!

The Youth Employment Toolkit was created to support central Iowa youth in building a path to professional achievement. Included in the toolkit are useful resources to help you achieve your goals and advance your career.

Discover how to craft standout resumes and perform interviews with confidence by highlighting essential job skills acquired through lived experience. Explore insights on workplace rights, financial savvy, and a wide array of career paths waiting to be explored.

Prepare to embark on an empowering journey with United Way of Central Iowa. The Youth Employment Toolkit is here to help guide you toward a growing, prospering, and thriving future.

TOOLKIT AUTHORS



Joshua Harris

Joshua was an intern with the Community Impact team at United Way of Central Iowa in the summer of 2024. A recent North High School graduate, Joshua spent three years in the Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families Summer Youth Experience Program has explored roles in marketing, video production, and project management during his three years in the Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families Summer Youth Experience Program.



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Azaree was an intern with the Community Impact team at United Way of Central Iowa in the summer of 2024. She spent six years in the Oakridge Neighborhood Services Summer Youth Experience Program. She is currently a student at Des Moines Area Community College with a strong desire to make a difference in her community.

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WHAT IS YOUTH EMPLOYMENT?

Youth employment means young individuals, in particular ages 16 to 19, engaging in a wide range of career paths. However, its importance is more than simply participation - it is about participating in purposeful, meaningful, and intentional opportunities. Whether through nonprofit organizations, businesses, or government agencies, these activities aim to empower you to discover and thrive in your career from part-time roles to real life career pathways. This sets the stage for a toolkit that encourages and supports your journey entering the workforce.

Importance of Youth Employment

Employers recognize that hiring younger employees allows the workplace to have different viewpoints and ideas. Some of the things you may bring to the workplace are:

- Diverse viewpoints and innovation
- Social stability and inclusion
- Enhanced productivity and well-being
- Creativity
- Adaptability
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Cultural awareness

SUCCESS STORIES

Iowa Homeless Youth Centers: IHYC Post Secondary Education Retention Program

One of the recent participants completed the program and graduated from DMACC in 2022. She started a career specific to her degree and purchased a home in 2023. The program was a support system for her while she was in school. She struggled with having stable housing and food security. Now that she has found stable ground, she still celebrates with her case managers. The program gave her a support system on her journey to success.

Urban Dreams: Youth Networking and Workforce

The Urban Dreams Youth Networking Workforce Program is a haven for youth and provides real world experiences. The relationships built with youth give the Urban Dreams staff the ability to write letters of recommendation for other job opportunities. Youth are given grace and have many teachable moments when they make mistakes. They are given the opportunity to recover from failures, which gives them a longer runway to success.

Forest Avenue Outreach: Pathway to Building Trades

Last summer, Forest Avenue had 14 kids in their program, and 12 stayed through to the end. Out of those 12, three are now applying to EP2, an electrical production company, where they plan to work.

Trinity found a job at Waldinger and can now support her family with her wages. Hunter is joining the military and studying engineering. Forest Avenue is committed to

tailoring their program to meet the unique needs of each young person. They even had a student who dropped out of school but reached out for help and found a new path in the cement trade. This summer, they are focused on recruiting students who were a great fit for the program and for careers in the trades, ensuring more success stories like these.

Pursuit of Innovation: Tech Mentorship

Before joining their program, this student never thought college was an option. In his Hispanic family, the focus was always on working rather than education. But things started to change when he began working with the Innovation team. They helped him find the best options for his future, guided him through applying to schools, registering for classes, and even getting scholarships. He loves the program because it provides him with consistency. He always attended the sessions and often went to the office for one-on-one help. Now, he is on his way to college, something he never imagined before.

WeLIFT Job Search Center: WeLIFT Let's Get to Work

WeLIFT is serving several kids who had no intention of going back to school. They had one youth who liked workshops but struggled with the work-based learning program. After working with this young person, they found out he got all his credits and will graduate this spring. WeLIFT is very proud of him.

WeLIFT has had to shift gears - in a few ways, addressing some of the root causes. They are also providing space for credit recovery because the school building is a challenging place for the youth they serve.

BENEFITS OF EARLY EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

Promoting Positive Youth Development

Early employment exposure plays a big role in positively impacting development, helping you get opportunities to feel a sense of belonging, and having the ability to sharpen new skills in an environment catered to your goals.

Unique Experiences tailored to enhance different skill sets

Youth Employment programs are different from regular careers, they offer unique experiences catered to cultivate a diverse range of skills that are outside of school, regular careers, or their environment. Youth Employment Programs give hands-on experience and learning opportunities for growth both personally and professionally. Youth employment programs are catered to you, your own set of goals, allowing you to explore your interests.

Leadership Development

Youth employment programs often include opportunities for leadership roles and responsibilities, allowing you to develop leadership skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and teamwork.

Networking Opportunities

By participating in these experiences, you have the chance to network with professionals, mentors, and peers in your chosen field or industry. These connections can lead to valuable career opportunities, mentorships, and long-term professional relationships.

Career Exploration and Guidance

Youth employment experiences provide exposure to various career paths and industries, helping you explore your interests and clarify career goals. This early exposure can guide future educational choices and career decisions.

Personal Growth and Confidence Building

Engaging in meaningful work and achieving success allows growth in self-esteem, self-confidence, and a sense of accomplishment among other things. This personal growth is essential for overall well-being and future success.

[Employment | Youth.gov](https://www.youth.gov/employment)

DISCOVER YOUR FUTURE: HOW TO FIND YOUR CAREER INTERESTS

Discovering your career interests is like finding a door that opens to your future. It's about exploring what excites you and aligning that with your professional journey. When you understand what drives you, it's easier to stay motivated and find satisfaction in your work. This toolkit section will guide you through discovering your passions and translating them into a meaningful career path.

Why Are Career Interests Important?

Understanding your career interests is crucial because they reflect what environments and tasks you enjoy most at work. Here's why it matters:

Job Satisfaction: When you work in a field that aligns with your interests, you're more likely to enjoy your job.

Smart Career Choices: Choosing a career that matches your interests ensures you're investing your time and effort wisely. It's a decision that sets you on a path to success.

Career Success: Being in a profession that matches your interests will motivate you to perform your best, make room for improvement, and grow professionally.

Personal Growth: Knowing your career interests helps you understand yourself better. It reveals your strengths, values, and what drives you—empowering you to make informed decisions both personally and professionally.

[Source: Forbes - Importance of Career Alignment](#)

Retaining a Career for Youth

To retain a career, you should focus on reliability, responsibility, and professionalism. Being punctual, meeting deadlines, and embracing accountability are essential skills. Continuous learning, skill development, networking, and staying updated on industry trends demonstrate adaptability and dedication. Positive communication, adherence to workplace norms, and openness to feedback help create a stable, supportive work environment, ensuring long-term value as a team member.

Advancing in a Career for Youth

You can advance your career by combining internal and external strategies. Within a company, seeking a mentorship, building networks, and taking on new responsibilities highlight leadership potential. Externally, skill development, certifications, and networking at industry events or on social media enhance visibility and expertise. These efforts position youth for growth and long-term success.

CAREER EXPLORATION OPPORTUNITIES

Having the opportunity to engage in career exploration is very important in the early stages of employment. There are many ways to participate in career exploration. Having workforce experience early in life helps you gain skills that prepare you for your future: learning how to work with others, how to solve problems, how to handle responsibilities, and of course, having a stable, reliable career results in earning a living wage that sets the foundation to being self-sufficient. Some jobs that are available to young people include:

- Fast food employees
- Internships (paid or unpaid)
- Lifeguards
- Retail work
- Construction
- Childcare
- Receptionist
- Hospitality
- Culinary
- Medical

Finding youth employment isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. It varies widely based on your goals, aspirations, and circumstances. Diversity in employment options and experiences matters.



TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

Full-Time position: A full-time job in Iowa usually involves working around 35 to 40 hours per week. However, the exact hours may vary depending on the employer's policies.

Part-Time Job: Part-time employment typically involves working fewer hours than full-time, often less than 35 hours per week. Part-time positions are common for students, retirees, or individuals seeking flexibility in their schedules.

Temporary or Seasonal Jobs: These positions are often available during specific times of the year or for short-term projects.

Contract Work: Contract jobs are temporary roles with defined start and end dates, typically hired for specific projects or tasks.

Freelance Work: Freelancers work independently on a project-by-project basis, often in creative, technical, or specialized fields.

Work-Study: A financial aid program allows students to earn money through part-time on- or off-campus jobs while pursuing a college degree.

[Part-Time vs. Full-Time Jobs: Key Differences To Know | Indeed.com](#)

What is an apprenticeship? Youth apprenticeship programs grew out of the school-to-work movement and offer classroom instruction combined with structured on-the-job training with a mentor. The training is split between academic courses and vocational training, while the on-the-job portion provides opportunities for practice in and understanding of work-based contexts for classroom instruction. Pre-apprenticeships and youth apprenticeships may lead to admission to adult registered apprenticeship programs after graduation. Once you graduate, you can go to trade school where you can learn a trade and become a part of a labor union. Job Corps has a multitude of opportunities for young people.

What is an internship? Internships, whether paid or unpaid, are key when seeking to gain practical experience, explore career options, and expand your professional networks. They provide opportunities to evaluate different workplaces, job roles, and management styles, helping you make informed career decisions. By participating in internships, you develop vital skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, directly enhancing employability. According to a 2005 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 60% of employers preferred hiring college graduates with internship experience. Additionally, over half of the interns were offered full-time positions upon completion, underscoring the significant impact internships have in preparing you for successful transitions into the workforce.

[Career Exploration and Skill Development | Youth.gov](#)

HOW TO FIND EMPLOYMENT

Navigating the job market can be both exciting and challenging. It's a chance for you to explore various career options, identify passions, and develop valuable skills. Fortunately, there are many resources available to help you discover interests, gain meaningful work experience, and explore a wide range of employment opportunities.

Self-Assessment and Counseling Services:

Think about what you like and don't like, how you respond to different situations, and what skills you have. If you need additional help, self-assessment tools are available to help you identify your strengths, interests, and values. These assessments are often available through school counselors, vocational centers, or career advisors. They can guide you through interpreting the results and providing personalized career counseling to match your skills with potential career paths.

Career Exploration Websites:

One of the most valuable resources is CareerOneStop, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. This website offers an abundance of information tailored to young job seekers:

- **Job Market Information:** Provides updated data on job salaries, benefits, and growth trends across different industries.
- **Education and Training Opportunities:** Offers insights into various educational paths, certifications, and training programs that can help you qualify for different jobs.
- **Job Search Tools:** Includes tools for creating resumes, writing cover letters, and preparing for interviews.
- **[My Next Move](#):** A guide specifically designed to help you explore different career options, understand job requirements, and plan career paths effectively.

HOW TO GAIN SOFT AND TECHNICAL SKILLS BEFORE EMPLOYMENT

Over a decade and a half of economic research has shown that soft skills affect employment outcomes. Economists Heckman and Kautz, for example, have advocated for greater attention to personality and character skills, including conscientiousness, persistence, work motivation, extraversion, emotional stability, social skills, and tolerance for risk. While measurement of such skills is complex, significant advancements have been made in this area as well. To prepare for employment, gaining both soft and technical skills is crucial. Here's how you can develop these skills before entering the workforce.

[Measuring Skills for Youth Workforce Development \(edu-links.org\)](https://edu-links.org)



SOFT SKILLS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Identify Key Soft Skills:

Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving, are essential for workplace success. Recognize which skills are most relevant to your desired career. To succeed in the workforce, mastering key soft skills are essential. Here are the critical skills that significantly enhance your chances of success:

- **Social Skills:** The ability to interact effectively with others is crucial in any workplace. This includes teamwork, collaboration, and the capacity to build relationships with colleagues and clients alike.
- **Communication:** Clear and effective communication is fundamental. This encompasses not only speaking and writing clearly but also active listening and understanding non-verbal cues.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills:

- **Problem Solving:** The capability to identify issues, analyze them, and develop effective solutions.
- **Critical Thinking:** Being able to evaluate information objectively, make reasoned judgments, and think creatively.
- **Decision-Making:** Making sound decisions based on available information, considering consequences and alternatives.

Intrapersonal Skills:

- **Self-Control:** Managing emotions and impulses effectively, particularly under pressure or in challenging situations.
- **Positive Self-Concept:** Having confidence in your abilities, a sense of self-worth, and maintaining a positive attitude towards yourself and others.

These skills are highly valued by employers across various industries because they contribute significantly to workplace productivity, collaboration, and overall success. Developing these soft skills through practice, training programs, educational experiences, and real-world applications will not only prepare you for the workforce but also enhance your career prospects and personal growth.

[2015-24AWFCSoftSkillsExecSum.pdf \(childtrends.org\)](#)

TYPES OF SKILLS

How to Work on Soft Skills

Classroom Instruction:

Many educational institutions offer courses or workshops focused on soft skills development. These can include communication seminars, leadership training, and conflict resolution classes.

Youth Programs:

Participate in youth programs that emphasize personal development and teamwork. These programs often include activities and projects that help you practice and improve soft skills.

Volunteering and Service-Learning:

Volunteer work provides excellent opportunities to develop soft skills while contributing to your community. Roles that involve teamwork, customer service, or project management can enhance skills like empathy and adaptability.

Technical Skills Development

Identify Required Technical Skills:

Depending on your career goals, identify the technical skills that are necessary. These could include proficiency in software, programming languages, specific tools or equipment, and industry-specific knowledge.

Formal Education:

Pursue formal education or training programs that offer hands-on experience and certification in technical areas relevant to your field of interest.

Online Courses and Tutorials:

Utilize online platforms that offer courses and tutorials in technical subjects. Websites like [Coursera](#), [edX](#), and [Khan Academy](#) provide access to a wide range of topics, from programming to data analysis.

Integration and Practice

Combine Soft and Technical Skills: Many jobs require a blend of both soft and technical skills. Practice integrating these skills in real-world scenarios through projects, internships, or volunteer work.

Continuous Learning: Keep updating and expanding your skills as technology and industries evolve. Attend workshops, seminars, and conferences to stay current with industry trends and advancements.

Feedback and Reflection: Seek feedback from mentors, peers, or supervisors to continuously improve both your soft and technical skills. Reflect on your experiences to identify areas for growth and development.

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER

A cover letter is a one-page document you send with your resume that features additional information about skills and experiences related to the career you're seeking. It is a way of introducing yourself to potential employers and explaining your suitability for the desired position. It typically includes three to four short paragraphs, in which you should mention the role you want by name and describe your interest, skills and relevant experience for the job.

When you begin to draft your first cover letter, a cover letter can be an overwhelming task, especially since your workforce journey is just beginning. However, structuring your cover letter concisely can help you make a great first impression on your potential employer.

How to Write a Cover Letter

Addressing the Cover Letter:

- Ensure you address it to the correct person, ideally the hiring manager. If you don't have a name, use a generic greeting like "Dear Hiring Manager"

Opening Paragraph:

- Grab attention by clearly stating the position you're applying for.
- Briefly explain your interest in the role and how your skills make you a good fit.

Second Paragraph:

- Expand on your skills and experience.
- Highlight relevant extracurricular activities, volunteer work, coursework, or achievements that demonstrate qualities like leadership, teamwork, or problem-solving.

Third Paragraph:

- Show your interest in the company by researching and mentioning their mission, recent projects, or industry impact.
- Demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for working with them.

Closing Paragraph:

- Thank the employer for considering your application.
- Reiterate your enthusiasm for the position and company.
- Provide your contact information and express readiness to discuss further.

Overall Tips:

- Keep the cover letter clear, concise, and tailored to the job and company.
- Showcase your unique strengths and what you can contribute.
- Proofread carefully to ensure its error-free and professional.

TIPS FOR WRITING A RESUME

You want your resume to clearly show the employer what kind of employee you'll be. You don't want them to have to waste their time deciphering your experiences. Here's how to do that:

Use a simple format and font. Use a resume template to guide your writing. Looking at examples can help you decide what kind of content you should include, as well as how to format your resume.

Think about what the employer wants. Make sure to tailor your resume to fit your own experiences, and the requirements of the position you're seeking. For example, if you are applying for a job as a camp counselor, highlight any experience you have working with children. If you are applying to be a waiter, emphasize experience in customer service, or working (or playing) on a team.

Use action words. When describing your achievements, use action words. Words like led, researched, tutored, and created emphasize the value of your experiences rather than just listing what you did.

Proofread and edit. Proofread your resume carefully before submitting it. A clean, error-free resume will show you off as a polished candidate. Ask a friend or family member to read the resume for you as well. It can be tough to spot your own typos and grammatical errors.

[Teen Resume Examples With Writing Tips \(thebalancemoney.com\)](https://www.thebalancemoney.com/teen-resume-examples-with-writing-tips)



Denise Applicant

Des Moines IA 50314 • (444) 555-1212 • denise.applicant@email.com

CHILDCARE WORKER– June 2017–2020 Building positive learning outcomes and life skills with children and students

Hard-working, responsible student with experience taking care of young children. Key skills include:

- Spanish–intermediate level
- French–beginner level
- First Aid, CPR, AED certifications
- Adobe Photoshop & InDesign
- Microsoft Office Suite
- Experience with children

PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

ROGERS HOUSEHOLD, Des Moines, IA

NANNY (February 2022–Present)

- Plan, organize, and implement fun and educational activities for three children younger than 6.

BEACON PROGRAM, Des Moines, IA

COUNSELOR (Summer 2021)

- As co-leader for a group of 10 first graders, implemented games designed to encourage creative problem-solving in science and engineering. Notable Accomplishment: Named “Counselor of the Week” twice for leadership skills.

MAPLE STREET CONVENIENCE STORE, Des Moines, IA

- CASHIER (Summer 2020) Managed cash register, restocked shelves, and assisted customers with locating items. Notable Accomplishment: Awarded for “Best Customer Service,” June 2020.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

- **NORTH HIGH SCHOOL**, Des Moines, IA
Honor roll each semester, diploma expected 2021

Related Coursework & Activities

Early Childhood Development • Urban Education • Urban Education–Psychology • Urban Education–Instructional Leadership • Modeling Club • Fundraising Chair, JROTC Drill Team • Vice President, Drama Club • Cheerleading

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your resume should include your contact information along with your experience and education.
- It’s fine to include extracurricular activities if you don’t have formal work experience.
- Tailor your resume to fit the requirements of the position you’re seeking.

MENTORSHIP

A mentor can help you advance within your field and connect you with opportunities that you might not have otherwise had access to. They do this by sharing their knowledge, helping you identify opportunities in your path, and potentially opening doors for you when the time comes. Almost every great achiever in history has claimed that they had a great mentor at some point during their rise to excellence. Mentorship is a valuable tool for turning one's vision into reality. Mentors are expected to guide and advise their mentees, helping them build a successful career or gain a solid footing within a certain organization. Typically, a mentor has one mentee at a time and can focus on shaping their trajectory.

Five Steps to Finding a Mentor

Understand the Purpose of Mentoring

- A mentor supports your overall success in life, offering guidance and encouragement without telling you what to do. They serve as great listeners, motivators, and connectors that help the beginning of your workforce journey be a success.

Define Your Goals and Challenges

- Identify your current goals in school, friendships, hobbies, or career interests. Recognize any personal or learning challenges you're facing.

Identify Potential Mentors

- Make a list of adults who know and respect you, such as teachers, counselors, or community leaders. Consider who could best support your goals and aspirations.

Ask for Mentorship

- Approach your top choice with a request for an initial meeting. Explain why you believe a mentor would benefit you and discuss your goals and challenges. Propose meeting regularly to discuss and receive guidance.

Nurture the Relationship

- Be open, respectful, and honest with your mentor. Ask questions to learn from their experiences and perspectives. Allow the relationship to grow naturally, and if it doesn't work out, it's okay to redefine or end the formal mentoring relationship.

Citations

1. Goldner, L., & Mayseless, O. (2008). The Quality of Mentoring Relationships and Mentoring Success. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(10), 1339.
- Description: This article explores the correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and their success outcomes.
2. Raposa, E. B., Rhodes, J., Stams, G. J. J. M., Card, N., Burton, S., Schwartz, S., . . . Hussain, S. (2019). The Effects of Youth Mentoring Programs: A Meta-analysis of Outcome Studies. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(3), 423-443.
- Description: This meta-analysis examines the effects of youth mentoring programs across various outcome measures.

[Why All Teenagers Need Non-Parent Mentors | Psychology Today](#)

EMPOWERING YOU TO SUCCEED: INTERVIEW PREPARATION ESSENTIALS

How to Prepare for a Job Interview

Preparing for a job interview can boost your confidence and ease your nerves. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you shine:

1. Know Your Strengths

- Reflect on Your Skills: Identify your top strengths, skills, and achievements.
- Get Feedback: Ask friends, family, or teachers for their thoughts to help you become more self-aware.

2. Research the Job and Company

- Review the Job Description: Understand the responsibilities and qualifications.
- Learn About the Company: Visit the company's website and learn about its history and current projects.
- Show Your Knowledge: Mention what you've learned during the interview to demonstrate your interest.

3. Memorize Your Resume

- Know the Details: Be familiar with your past jobs, including titles, companies, dates, and responsibilities.

- Highlight Relevant Experience: Focus on the skills and knowledge you gained from each role that is relevant to the job.

4. Conduct Practice Interviews

- Mock Interviews: Ask friends, family or peers to conduct practice interviews with you.
- Rehearse Answers: Practice answering common and job-specific interview questions.
- Practice Professionalism: Work on giving a firm handshake, maintaining eye contact, and thanking the interviewer.

5. Prepare Your Materials

- Bring Extra Copies: Have several copies of your resume, cover letter, portfolio, and a list of references.
- Take Notes: Another way to elevate your interview game is by bringing a notepad and pen to jot down important points during the interview.

6. Prepare Your Own Questions

- Ask About the Role: Think of questions to ask the interviewer about the job and company that you couldn't find answers to online.
- Show Your Interest: Asking questions demonstrates your interest and helps you learn more about the position.

7. Choose Your Outfit

- Dress Professionally: Wear a polished, wrinkle-free outfit suitable for the company's dress code.
- Go for Business Casual: If unsure, go for a business casual look, such as a blazer, jacket, etc.

8. Plan Your Arrival

- Ensure Reliable Transportation: Make sure you have a dependable way to get to the interview.
- Plan to Arrive Early: Aim to arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

9. Send a Thank You Note

- Showing appreciation: Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the interview.
- Keep It Simple: Thank the interviewer for their time and reiterate your interest in the role.

Why These Steps Matter

- Confidence and Preparation: Candidates who are well-prepared for interviews are 40% more likely to receive job offers.
- Professionalism: 62% of employers consider professionalism/work ethic a critical factor when making hiring decisions.
- Research and Interest: Candidates who demonstrate a strong understanding of the company are 2.5 times more likely to receive a job offer.

Final Tips

Remember, the interview is not just about showing that you're the right fit for the job, but also about determining if the job and company are the right fit for you. Stay calm, be yourself, and show enthusiasm for the opportunity. With the right preparation and mindset, you'll be ready to impress and take the next step in your career journey.

[National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\). \(2017\). Job Outlook. 2017-nace-job-outlook-full-report.pdf \(toughaloo.edu\)](https://www.nace.org/job-outlook/2017-nace-job-outlook-full-report.pdf)

How long should you prepare for an interview? (with tips) | indeed.com (no date) Indeed.com. Available at: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-long-should-you-prepare-for-an-interview>

EMPLOYMENT ETIQUETTE: ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR YOUR FIRST JOB

Starting your first job is an exciting step into new territory, but it can also be daunting. Here are essential tips for job etiquette to help you navigate this journey successfully:

Be Punctual: Arrive on time and honor your work commitments. Being punctual shows reliability and respect for your job. According to a study by Career Builder, workers ages 18 to 34 are 38% late at least once a month.

Dress Appropriately: Maintain a neat appearance. Your attire reflects professionalism and respect for the workplace environment.

Minimize Distractions: Stay focused by avoiding smartphone usage during work hours, except during breaks. This helps maintain productivity and shows dedication to your tasks. A study by Pew Research Center indicates that excessive phone use at work is a common concern among employers.

Handle Personal Issues Privately: Maintain professionalism by addressing personal matters outside of work. Resolving conflicts discreetly and respectfully contributes to a positive work environment.

Customer/Client Service Excellence:

Engage with customers and/or clients courteously and attentively. Your interactions impacts satisfaction and reflects positively on the business. Research from American Express shows that 86% of customers and/or clients are willing to pay more for better, attentive service.

Self-Motivation: Take initiative and demonstrate a willingness to learn. Employers value proactive employees who show initiative in their roles. A survey by Gallup found that self-motivation is a key trait employers look for in new hires.

Learn from Feedback: Embrace constructive criticism and learn from mistakes. Accepting feedback positively fosters personal growth and improvement in your job performance.

Exit Gracefully: When moving on from a job, give adequate notice and express gratitude. Leaving on good terms ensures positive references and maintains professional relationships.

Maintain Work-Life Balance: Avoid overcommitting and prioritize schoolwork and personal time. Balancing responsibilities helps prevent burnout and supports overall well-being.

Following these tips will help you navigate your first job with confidence and professionalism, setting a strong foundation for your future career success.

Remember, each job experience is an opportunity to learn and grow, so make the most of it!

[Source: Tardiness affects fewer workers, but 25% still admit struggling to be on time | HR Dive](#)

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Financial literacy is a crucial skill to obtain when entering the workforce. Understanding the basics of budgeting, saving, and managing paychecks and taxes can set a strong foundation for financial stability and independence. Here's a practical guide to get started:

[How To Teach Financial Literacy To Youth | LiveWell](#)

Budgeting

Budgeting is the cornerstone of financial planning. It helps you track your income and expenses, ensuring you live within your means and save for future goals. Here's how to create a budget:

Calculate Your Income: Identify your total monthly income from your job.

List Your Expenses: Make a list of all your monthly expenses, including rent, utilities, groceries, transportation, and entertainment.

Differentiate Needs vs. Wants: Differentiate between essential expenses (needs) and discretionary spending (wants).

Set Priorities: Allocate your income to cover essential expenses first, then allocate a portion for savings and discretionary spending.

Track and Adjust: Regularly track your spending against your budget and adjust as needed to stay on track.

Saving

Saving money is essential for emergencies, future purchases, and long-term financial security. Here are tips for effective saving:

Establish Savings Goals: Whether it's an emergency fund, a vacation, or a big purchase, set specific savings goals.

Automate Savings: Set up automatic transfers from your checking account to a savings account to make saving a habit.

Track Your Progress: Monitor your savings regularly and celebrate milestones to stay motivated.

Understanding Paychecks

Understanding your paycheck ensures you know how much you're earning and how deductions impact your take-home pay. Key elements of a paycheck include:

Gross Pay: The total amount you earned before any deductions.

Net Pay: The amount you receive after deductions such as taxes, retirement contributions, and health insurance.

Deductions: Understand various deductions like federal and state income taxes, Social Security, and Medicare.

[Source: How To Teach Financial Literacy To Youth | LiveWell](#)

UNDERSTANDING TAXES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Getting a job is a great way to make money, but there are important things you need to educate yourself about, like taxes. It is important to understand why taxes exist and how to properly navigate them.

What are Taxes?

Taxes are mandatory contributions to government revenue, and understanding them is crucial for financial planning:

Income Taxes: Federal and state income taxes are deducted from your paycheck based on your income level and filing status.

Social Security and Medicare: These are contributions towards future benefits and healthcare for retirees and disabled individuals.

Taxable Income

Earning Money: Any money you earn from a career is considered taxable income by the IRS. This includes wages from both short-term and year-round jobs.

Tax Filing Requirement: Whether you need to file taxes depends on how much you earn. If you're under 19 (or under 24 and a full-time student), and your income is below a certain amount (for example, \$12,950 in 2024), you typically won't owe taxes and might not need to file a tax return.

Reporting Wages and Withholding

Form W-4: When you start a job, you'll fill out a Form W-4. This tells your employer how much federal income tax your paycheck takes out. You can also claim exemption from withholding if you expect to earn less than the standard deduction amount.

Dependent Status: If your parents or guardians claim you as dependent on their taxes and your income is under the standard deduction limit, you usually won't have to file your own tax return.

[Teens and Taxes: Tax Implications for a Summer Job - SmartAsset](#)



FILING YOUR FIRST FEDERAL TAX RETURN: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Filing your first federal tax return can seem daunting, but with the right information, it's straightforward. Here's what you need to get started:

1. Social Security Number (SSN)

Why It's Important: Your SSN is essential for filing your tax return and ensures accurate identification by the IRS.

2. Wage and Income Information

Forms You Need: You'll receive a Form W-2 from your employer showing your wages and taxes withheld. If you received other income, like from freelance work or investments, you may also need Form 1099.

Scholarships and Grants: Parts of scholarships or grants used for living expenses may count as taxable income, so gather any related documentation.

3. Dependency Status

Check with Your Parents: Ensure your parents are not claiming you as a dependent on their tax return. If you're being claimed as a dependent, you cannot claim yourself.

4. Tax Credits and Deductions

Standard Deduction: The standard deduction has increased significantly, making it likely more beneficial than itemizing deductions for most first-time filers.

5. Electronic Filing Details

Prior-Year Income: If this is your first time filing and you're over 16, enter "0" as your prior-year adjusted gross income for electronic signature purposes.

Direct Deposit: Provide your bank account and routing number if you expect a refund, as direct deposit is the fastest way to receive it.

UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction to Your Workplace Rights and Responsibilities

Understanding your workplace rights and responsibilities is essential for young workers. Knowing your rights ensures you are treated fairly and safely; while understanding your responsibilities helps you succeed on the job. This section will help you learn about the laws that protect you, the safety rules you need to follow, the types of jobs you can do, and what is expected of you at work. Being informed empowers you to navigate the workplace confidently and responsibly.

Why It's Important

In 2022, approximately 19.4 million workers under the age of 25 were employed, making up 12.2% of the total workforce. Young workers have significantly high rates of job-related injuries, often due to hazards in their work environments like retail and restaurants, coupled with their lack of prior work experience and safety training.

Employer Responsibilities

Employers are required to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees, including young workers. Key responsibilities include:

- **Compliance with Laws:** Adhering to the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and all relevant federal and state child labor laws.
- **Hazard Communication:** Informing young workers about potential or known workplace hazards through training, policies, programs, and safety practices.
- **Training:** Providing safety training in a language and format that young workers can understand.
- **Safe Equipment Use:** Ensuring that the equipment used by young workers is both legal and safe, and clearly labeling any equipment that is off-limits.
- **Injury Procedures:** Educating young workers on what to do if they get hurt on the job.
- **OSHA Poster:** Displaying the OSHA poster (or state equivalent) that lists workers' rights and responsibilities.
- **Whistleblower Protections:** Protecting workers who exercise their rights under OSHA.

Worker Responsibilities

Young workers can also take steps to protect themselves:

- **Safety Equipment:** Use work-supplied safety equipment and follow all safety training.

- **Reporting Hazards:** Inform a supervisor if something is unsafe at work and ask for follow-up with a safety person if needed.
- **Refusing Unsafe Work:** Exercise the right to refuse tasks that are unsafe and speak with a supervisor about safety concerns.

Basic Safety Skills for Workers

Young workers should develop these basic safety skills:

- **Recognize Risks:** Understand that workplace injuries can occur and can impact your life and family.
- **Prevent Injuries:** Most work-related injuries and illnesses are predictable and preventable.
- **Identify Hazards:** Learn to spot hazards at work, evaluate risks, and predict how injuries can happen.
- **Handle Hazards:** Know the best ways to manage hazards and apply these methods at your workplace.
- **Respond to Emergencies:** Be prepared to handle emergencies effectively.
- **Know Your Rights:** Understand both employer and worker rights and responsibilities for a safe workplace.
- **Find Resources:** Use available resources to maintain a safe and healthy work environment.
- **Communicate:** Learn how to communicate safety concerns and questions to supervisors or people in charge.

By understanding and exercising your and responsibilities, you can contribute to a safer and healthier workplace, ensuring you remain protected while gaining valuable work experience.

Conclusion: Empowering Young Workers

Understanding your workplace rights and responsibilities is crucial for your safety and success on the job. Employers play a significant role in ensuring a safe and healthy work environment, but you also have the power to protect yourself. By being informed, proactive, and communicative, you can navigate the workplace confidently and responsibly.

Remember, your well-being is paramount. Recognize potential hazards, know your rights, and don't hesitate to speak up about safety concerns. Utilize the resources available to you, and always prioritize your safety over any job task.

Empower yourself with knowledge and take an active role in creating a safe work environment. Your future success and health depend on it.

Stay safe, stay informed, and make the most of your work experiences.

For More Information and Support:

- Visit [YouthRules!](#) for comprehensive information on youth employment.
- Check out OSHA Teen Workers for safety guidelines and resources.

Sources:

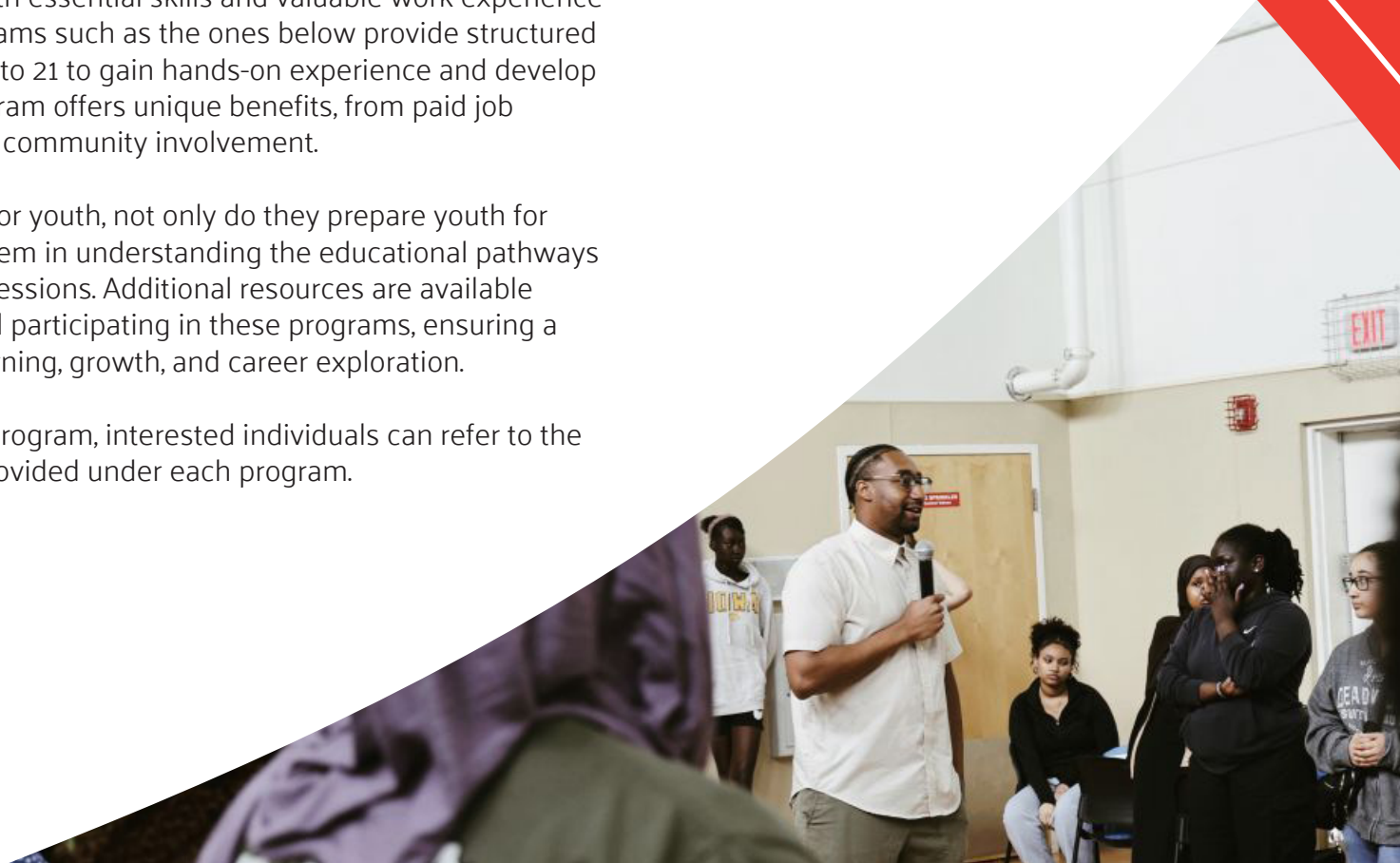
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). [Employment statistics for young workers.](#)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). (2022). [Employer responsibilities and safety regulations.](#)

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN IOWA

Central Iowa offers a diverse range of youth employment programs aimed at equipping young individuals with essential skills and valuable work experience across various industries. Programs such as the ones below provide structured opportunities for youth ages 14 to 21 to gain hands-on experience and develop career focused skills. Each program offers unique benefits, from paid job training and career coaching to community involvement.

By having these opportunities for youth, not only do they prepare youth for future careers but also guide them in understanding the educational pathways necessary for their desired professions. Additional resources are available to assist youth in accessing and participating in these programs, ensuring a supportive environment for learning, growth, and career exploration.

For more information on each program, interested individuals can refer to the specific additional resources provided under each program.



LIST OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN CENTRAL IOWA

Y-ExCEL Summer Program

The Y-ExCEL Summer Program is an opportunity for youth aged 14 to 21 in central Iowa. It offers a paid, 10-week job training program that helps participants develop crucial skills for future careers. Before starting their jobs, participants undergo a two-week paid training session focusing on essential workplace skills such as ethics, communication, dress code, and time management. This program not only prepares youth for employment but also guides them towards understanding the education and training necessary for their desired careers.

Additional Resources:

- [Y-EXCL Summer Program Overview](#) and application process details
 - [Employer Partner Form](#)
-

Iowa Workforce Development Summer Youth Employment Program

Iowa Workforce Development offers a summer youth employment program designed to connect youth aged 16 to 21 with paid work experience across various industries. Participants receive job skills training, career coaching, and support to enhance their employability. The program emphasizes firsthand learning and provides opportunities for career exploration and development.

Additional Resources:

- [Central Iowa Works Summer Youth Employment Program Overview](#)

Oakridge Youth Summer Employment Program (YSEP)

The Youth Summer Employment Program (YSEP) is tailored for high school youth in central Iowa. It provides nine weeks of paid part-time work (20-30 hours per week) at various non-profit and public locations across the community. Youth not only earn income but also gain valuable job skills through workshops and direct experiences. YSEP focuses on providing positive youth development, offering opportunities for career exploration, leadership development, and community involvement.

Additional Resources:

- YSEP Program Details and Eligibility overview- [Youth Education - Oakridge Neighborhood](#)
 - [Summer Youth Employment Program Application](#)
-

Avenue Scholars Des Moines Public Schools Internships

Launched during the 2022-2023 school year at Des Moines Public Schools, the Avenue Scholars program is tailored for students beginning their junior year of high school. It provides ongoing support through postsecondary training and continues to assist them for six months as they transition into their careers.

Additional Resources:

- Avenue Scholars Program Overview- [Avenue Scholars Des Moines \(avescholarsdesmoines.org\)](#)
- Student resources and Internships- [Student Resources | Avenue Scholars Des Moines \(avescholarsdesmoines.org\)](#)

Polk County Conservation Youth Corps Program

Established in 2017, the Polk County Conservation Youth Corps program offers young people a rewarding service-learning experience focused on conservation. Crew leaders (ages 19+) guide teams of teenagers (ages 14-18) through various service projects in woodlands, prairies, and wetlands, contributing to park maintenance efforts. This program not only emphasizes hands-on learning and outdoor activities but also provides opportunities to earn income, develop skills, and support Polk County parks and trails.

Additional Resources:

- [Application Link](#)
 - [About Youth Corps - Polk County Iowa](#)
-

YouthWorks

YouthWorks in Des Moines, Iowa, provides valuable employment opportunities for young people, helping them gain practical skills and experience in various fields. Through this program, youth not only earn income but also develop essential workplace skills that prepare them for future careers. YouthWorks connects local businesses and organizations with motivated youth, fostering a supportive environment for learning and growth.

Additional Resources:

- [Application Link](#)

Principal Financial Group

Interns gain real-world experience and decide their career path with [Principal's](#) internship program. The program offers focused activities and opportunities to develop skills, build relationships, and explore personal and career aspirations. Flexible start and end dates accommodate students' academic commitments, with most internships during the summer (10-12 weeks) and some extending into an academic semester (6-7 months). Each internship listing specifies the required timeframe and work format (onsite, hybrid, or remote)

Additional Resources:

- [Internships | Principal Careers](#)

RESOURCE CITATION

Pew Research Center, “Mobile Technology and Home Broadband 2019”

Description: Research findings on the use of mobile technology and home broadband in 2019.

Source: Pew Research Center. (n.d.). Mobile Technology and Home Broadband 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2019/06/13/mobile-technology-and-home-broadband-2019/>

IRS Free File: Ideal for young and first-time filers | Internal Revenue Service

Description: Information about the IRS Free File program, designed to assist young and first-time filers with filing their taxes for free.

Source: Internal Revenue Service. (n.d.). IRS Free File: Ideal for young and first-time filers. Retrieved from <https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free>

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