

Your Career Plan

Now that you have completed the exercises and assignments in Unit 13 of this course, you should have drafts of a résumé and cover letter ready for polishing.

Polish Your Résumé and Cover Letter

Identify at least one person whose opinion you trust to review your résumé and cover letter and provide feedback. You do not have to take all the advice this person offers, but you should consider every suggestion or idea this person puts forward for possible incorporation into your résumé. If you have access to a career counselor through your school, make an appointment so that he or she can also review your résumé and cover letter. A career counselor is an outstanding resource for you to consult throughout your college career. Don't wait until you are getting ready to graduate to take advantage of your campus career center.

Once you have a polished résumé and cover letter, you can use the contents of your résumé to create a professional online profile. Many employers rely on online social networking sites such as LinkedIn to provide information and insight about prospective employees, clients, and colleagues.

Create or Enhance Your Online Professional Profile

Remember that your online conduct can have a tremendous influence on how prospective employers and colleagues view your qualifications. Whether you are using a social or professional online website, you are making an impression on someone. At this time, share your experience and thoughts about creating an online professional profile in the Try College 101 Discussion Board. Then, study the steps for creating a professional profile outlined below.

1. **Create a profile.** Using the information on your résumé, create (or enhance) your online professional profile. LinkedIn is one example of an online professional networking site that you can join at no cost.
2. **Build your network.** Look for people you already know who are connected to your professional networking site and request that they connect with you.
3. **Manage your network.** Think about your own personal guidelines for building your network. Will you connect with anyone who asks? Will you only accept connections from people you know in person? Will you only connect with people whose work you would endorse or recommend? These are important questions to consider as you build your professional network. Use the space below to brainstorm the guidelines you will follow as you build your professional profile.

4. **Join a group.** Find at least one professional or industry group that relates to your major or career objective and request to join that group. If you are already a member of an organization off-line, see whether or not they have an online group, and if so, be sure and join that group.
5. **Participate.** Once you have joined a professional or industry group, ask or answer a discussion questions that may arise among group members.
6. **Stay up-to-date.** Keep your résumé and profile current. As you gain more experience, knowledge, and skills, update your online profile along with your résumé. It is much easier to update your résumé as it evolves than to update it right before you need it.

Create and Maintain a Professional Portfolio

Throughout this course you have been asked to complete assignments, participate in exercises, and take assessments that will be useful to you as you pursue your chosen major and career. By creating and maintaining a professional portfolio, you can preserve and have access to many of these documents and resources.

An easy way to collect these documents is to use a notebook. Use a three-ring binder, divider tabs, pockets, and/or other tools to collect items for your professional portfolio. Collect documents, work products, assignments, assessments, and other resources from this course. Add to your portfolio as you continue along your career path.

In addition, you may want to keep electronic copies of your professional files in a folder on your computer. Always keep both electronic and hard copies of your most important documents, and be sure to update them to reflect any new changes.

Some examples of sections you may wish to include in your career binder are:

- **A description of your career goals**
- **A list of your relevant accomplishments** (This may include examples of successful work projects you have led or completed, and any professional or academic awards you have received)
- **Your résumé**
- **Your cover letters, including versions specifically tailored for different jobs**
- **References and recommendations from former employers and instructors**

- **Sample job descriptions** (As you collect descriptions of jobs that you find appealing, make copies and keep them in your notebook.)
- **Job search documentation** (Create a spreadsheet to record your job search activities. Include documentation of when and to whom you have submitted your résumé, job descriptions of positions you have applied for, phone calls you have made and emails you have sent to prospective employers, etc.)
- **Networking** (Keep track of the names and positions of important contacts, their phone numbers and email addresses, and their business cards.)
- **Writing samples** (Include “A” papers and other documents that show off your writing skills.)
- **Work samples** (Have you created works such as graphics, brochures, or other products that showcase your technical skills?)
- **Career research** (Collect information and data that you have come across while researching your major or career field.)
- **Professional organizations** (Track information about the college and professional organizations to which you belong.)
- **Conferences** (Keep materials from any conferences and seminars that you have attended or would like to attend.)
- **Certificates** (Store any certificates or accreditations you have earned from professional courses and workshops.)

What other tabs might you include in your professional portfolio? Share your ideas in the Try College 101 Discussion Board.