GoalTodo

# Find a better job: a steady, week-by-week search for 22 weeks

## Find a better job

26 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, May 30

# Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

## What better means

Decide

- [ ] Write down what better means for you: pay, hours, commute, the work itself, room to grow, the people
  30 min
- [ ] Write down what you'd keep from your current or last job, and what you'd leave behind
  20 min

**Done when:** You've written the lowest pay you'd move for, the two things that matter most, and anything that would rule a job out. The job title comes in week 5.

**Sticking point:** "Better" is easy to feel and hard to pin down. Think about what made you start looking, and write down the opposite.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

## Your skills and interests

Explore

- [ ] Take a free interests and skills assessment from a government career service
  45 min
- [ ] List the skills you use at work and outside it, and star the ones you enjoy using
  30 min

**Done when:** You have a list of three to five job titles worth looking into

**Sticking point:** Quiz results are a starting point, not an answer. Keep the titles that make you curious and drop the rest.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

## Research the roles

Explore

- [ ] Look up each job title in a government career profile: what you'd do, typical pay, the outlook and the qualifications it needs
  30 min each

**Done when:** You've narrowed your list to two job titles that have openings where you live or work remotely, pay what you need, and that you're qualified for or close to

**Sticking point:** If every option needs a new qualification, keep one title you could apply for now. You can train for the other while you earn.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

## Ask for informational interviews

Explore

- [ ] Find two people who do the jobs on your shortlist, through friends, old colleagues or online, and ask each for a short chat about their work
  20 min

**Done when:** You've asked two people for a short chat, and noted when you'll follow up with anyone who hasn't replied

**Sticking point:** Make it clear you're asking about their work, not for a job. That's an easy thing to say yes to.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

## Talk to them, then choose

Decide

- [ ] Hold any informational interviews you've booked: ask what a typical day is like, what's most and least rewarding, and what employers look for
  15 to 30 min
- [ ] Send each person a short thank-you note
  10 min
- [ ] Choose one job title to aim for, from your chats and your research, and add it to what you wrote in week 1. If nobody could talk yet, choose from your research and keep the chat for later
  20 min

**Done when:** You've chosen one job title, and your week 1 notes now name it

**Sticking point:** If a skill gap shows up, write it down. Apply for what you can do now, and close the gap alongside. The Learn a new skill plan can help.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

## Bring your CV up to date

Prepare

- [ ] Update your CV: add your recent achievements, check your contact details, and cut old experience that no longer helps
  1 hour
- [ ] Ask two people to read it and tell you what's unclear
  10 min

**Done when:** Your CV is up to date, two people have read it, and you've made their fixes

**Sticking point:** Write what changed because of you, not only what you were responsible for. Numbers help: time saved, money, customers, people trained.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

## Your target list

Prepare

- [ ] List 8 to 10 employers you'd like to work for, from their websites and what you hear from people
  45 min
- [ ] Set up job alerts for your job title, and bookmark the careers page of each employer on your list
  20 min
- [ ] Update your online professional profile so it matches your CV
  30 min

**Done when:** You have a list of 8 to 10 employers, alerts set for your job title, and an online profile that matches your CV

**Sticking point:** Searching while you're still employed? Use your own phone, email and time, and check what your profile shares with your network before you change it.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

## Tell the people you trust

Prepare

- [ ] Write two or three sentences on what you do and what you're looking for
  20 min
- [ ] Tell someone you trust what you're looking for, and ask for one small thing, such as a name or an introduction
  15 min

**Done when:** Five people know what you're looking for, and you've written down any names they gave you

**Sticking point:** The US and Canadian government job services both say many jobs are never advertised and get filled through people. That's why this week comes before the applications.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

## Your first three applications

Apply

- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each
- [ ] Start a tracker: employer, role, date sent, who you contacted, next step
  20 min

**Done when:** You've sent three tailored applications and logged each one in your tracker

**Sticking point:** Match your CV to the advert: use its words for skills you really have, and put your most relevant experience first.

Feb 1–7
Week 10

## Five sent

Apply

- [ ] [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each
- [ ] Contact one employer on your list directly, or someone who works there
  20 min

**Done when:** You've sent five applications in all, and contacted one employer on your list

**Sticking point:** Contacting an employer directly can feel pushy. Keep it short: who you are, what you do, and one question about their team.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

## Your interview stories

Prepare

- [ ] [ ] Write five examples from your work in the STAR format: situation, task, action, result
  45 min
- [ ] [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** You have five written examples, each ending in a clear result, and you've sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Pick examples that match the adverts you're applying to: a problem you solved, a time you led, a time something went wrong and what you did.

Feb 15–21
Week 12

## Follow up

Apply

- [ ] Send a short email confirming your interest for any application with no reply after two weeks, unless the advert said not to
  10 min each
- [ ] [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** Every application over two weeks old with no reply has a follow-up, and you've sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Silence is normal, and so is a short, polite follow-up. Don't read a slow reply as a no.

Feb 22–28
Week 13

## An informational conversation

Network

- [ ] Ask someone at an employer on your list for a short chat about their work and team
  20 min
- [ ] Hold the chat, then send a thank-you note
  30 min
- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** You've had or booked one conversation with someone at an employer on your list, and sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Don't ask for a job in the chat. Ask what their team looks for, and whether there's anyone else you should talk to.

Mar 1–7
Week 14

## Practise out loud

Interview

- [ ] Practise answering common interview questions out loud with your STAR examples, with a friend or by recording yourself
  30 min
- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** You've answered ten common interview questions out loud, and sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Your first answers will ramble. That's why you practise now and not on the day.

Mar 8–14
Week 15

## Go direct

Apply

- [ ] Contact an employer on your list directly, or someone who works there
  20 min
- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** You've contacted two more employers on your list and sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Steady beats heroic. A couple of good applications a week, every week, adds up.

Mar 15–21
Week 16

## What's working

Review

- [ ] Count your applications, replies and interviews in your tracker
  20 min
- [ ] Change one thing based on what you find: your CV, your target list, or the roles you apply for
  1 hour

**Done when:** You've counted your results and changed one thing

**Sticking point:** Ten or more applications and no interviews? Look at your CV and the roles you're choosing first. A free careers adviser can read your CV with fresh eyes.

Mar 22–28
Week 17

## Keep going, with your change

Apply

- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each
- [ ] Contact one employer on your list directly, or someone who works there
  20 min
- [ ] Follow up any application with no reply after two weeks
  10 min each

**Done when:** You've sent two applications with this week's change, contacted one employer, and followed up anything over two weeks old

Mar 29–Apr 4
Week 18

## Ease off

Lighter week

- [ ] Follow up anything over two weeks old
  20 min
- [ ] Take an evening off the search and do something that does you good
  an evening

**Done when:** You've followed up anything waiting, and taken two evenings off the search

**Sticking point:** Rejections pile up during a search, and feeling flat is normal. A lighter week is part of the plan, not a failure.

Apr 5–11
Week 19

## Reconnect

Network

- [ ] Get back in touch with a former colleague or manager: say what you're doing now and what you're looking for — 15 min — ×3
- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert — 1 hour each — ×2

**Done when:** Three former colleagues know you're looking, and you've sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Old colleagues know your work. A short, friendly message with one specific ask is enough.

Apr 12–18
Week 20

## References and your number

Prepare

- [ ] Ask two people who know your work to be references, and send them your CV and the kind of role you're applying for — 30 min
- [ ] Write down your pay range: the typical range for the role, the lowest you'd accept, and what you'd ask for — 30 min
- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert — 1 hour each — ×2

**Done when:** Two references have said yes, you've written down your pay range, and you've sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** Ask before you give anyone's name as a reference. A reference who knows the kind of job you're going for can speak to it.

Apr 19–25
Week 21

## Keep going

Apply

- [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert — 1 hour each — ×2
- [ ] Contact one employer on your list directly, or someone who works there — 20 min
- [ ] Follow up any application with no reply after two weeks — 10 min each

**Done when:** You've sent two more applications, contacted one employer, and followed up anything over two weeks old

**Sticking point:** Each employer's interviews can take three to five weeks. Keep applying while you wait to hear back.

Apr 26–May 2
Week 22

## Learn from each interview

Interview

- [ ] After an interview, write down the questions you were asked and how you'd answer them better
  20 min
- [ ] If you didn't get the job, ask the interviewer for feedback
  10 min
- [ ] [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** You've written notes on your latest interview, or done one more practice interview if you haven't had one yet, and sent two more applications

**Sticking point:** It's common to go to a few interviews before an offer. Each one makes the next easier.

May 3–9
Week 23

## Second check

Review

- [ ] Count your results again and compare them with your first review, What's working
  20 min
- [ ] Widen your search if you need to: a nearby job title, a bigger area, or employers you hadn't considered
  45 min
- [ ] [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** You've compared your results with your first review, decided whether to widen your search, and sent two more applications

May 10–16
Week 24

## Get ready to decide

Offer

- [ ] Turn what you wrote in week 1 into a checklist to hold any offer against
  20 min
- [ ] Write the questions you'll ask about an offer: duties, pay, hours, remote or onsite, leave, benefits and training
  30 min
- [ ] [ ] Send a tailored application: your CV and a cover letter matched to the advert
  1 hour each

**Done when:** Your checklist and offer questions are written, and you've kept applying

**Sticking point:** Wait for an offer before you bring up pay yourself. If you're asked about it earlier, give the typical range for the role.

May 17–23
Week 25

### Weigh it up and negotiate

Offer

- [ ] When an offer comes, thank them, say you're keen, and ask for at least 24 hours to decide
  10 min
- [ ] Check the offer against your checklist, and talk it over with someone you trust
  45 min
- [ ] If it falls short, ask once for what you want, based on what you'd bring and the typical range
  20 min

**Done when:** You've checked your offer against your checklist and asked for anything you want changed. No offer yet? You've followed up and kept applying.

**Sticking point:** The first offer often has some room. Ask for what matters most to you, keep it short, and base it on the value you'd bring, not on your bills.

May 24–30
Week 26

### Accept and set your start date

Start

- [ ] Accept the offer and ask for it in writing, with the pay, hours, start date and any conditions, such as references or checks
  20 min
- [ ] If you have a job to leave, hand in your notice in writing once any conditions on the offer have been met, and agree your last day
  30 min
- [ ] Confirm your start date with your new employer
  10 min

**Done when:** You have the offer in writing, any conditions on it are met, your notice is in if you have a job to leave, and you have a start date. No offer yet? You've followed up and kept applying.

**Sticking point:** Don't resign until the offer is in writing and any conditions, such as references or checks, have been met. Then leave well: your old manager may be a reference one day.

# How the plan works

The plan takes you from deciding what better means towards a written offer and a start date, in the order the four steps on your board follow: write down what better means, update your CV and apply to five, get to an interview, start the new job.

First you prepare. You pin down what you want, bring your CV up to date, list 8 to 10 employers you'd like to work for, and tell people you trust what you're looking for. The US and Canadian government job services both say many jobs are never advertised, and the US one says about half of new jobs are found through connections, so the people you know matter as much as the adverts.

Then you apply steadily. After four weeks of preparation, or eight if you're not sure what you want yet, you send two or three tailored applications a week, contact an employer on your list directly, and follow up after two weeks. Most weeks take two to four hours. Each week adds one thing on top: interview stories, practice out loud, a review of what's working, references, and getting ready for an offer.

It takes longer than most people expect. One university careers office puts the average search at around five to six months from application to hiring. Another says to plan on about three months of active searching before an opportunity turns into an offer. The plan sits between the two. A shorter plan leaves out some of the keep-going weeks, never the preparation or the offer weeks.

Offers don't arrive on a schedule. If one comes early, jump to the offer weeks. If you reach the end without one, carry on with a keep-going week and a review every month until you have one. That isn't failing: it's how long searches take.

# Which level to pick

- I'm not sure what I want next: you know you want something better, but not which job. You spend four extra weeks finding out what fits, including asking two people who do the work for a short conversation.
- I know the role I want: you can name the job title you're aiming for, even if you've never done it.

If you're torn between two job titles, pick the first level. Week 5 is where you choose.

# Before you start

If you're still employed, keep the search quiet. Use your own phone, email and laptop, search in your own time, and only tell people you trust. Check your contract for your notice period, so you know how soon you could start somewhere new.

Know your numbers. Look up the typical pay for the role you want in your area before you apply anywhere. It tells you whether a move is really better, and what to ask for later.

Use free help. Government careers services offer free advice, CV reviews and interview practice:

- US: CareerOneStop (https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/job-search.aspx), sponsored by the US Department of Labor, and your local American Job Center (https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx)
- UK: the National Careers Service (https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/contact-us), free advisers by phone or webchat
- Canada: the Government of Canada's career planning tools (https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning)
- Australia: Your Career (https://www.yourcareer.gov.au/)

If you're a graduate, your university's careers service often helps alumni too.

If you need a qualification first, the Learn a new skill plan can run alongside this one. Keep applying for the jobs you can do now.

# What you'll need

- Your CV and a basic cover letter you can tailor for each application.
- A tracker: a spreadsheet or notebook with the employer, role, date sent, who you contacted and the next step.
- Your week 1 notes: what better means, your lowest pay and your dealbreakers.
- A government pay tool, such as CareerOneStop's Salary Finder (https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Wages/find-salary.aspx), the National Careers Service's job profiles (https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers) or Canada's wages search (https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages).
- A free skills assessment if you're not sure what you want, such as CareerOneStop's interest assessment (https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Careers/interest-assessment.aspx) or the National Careers Service's skills assessment (https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/skills-assessment).
- A personal email address and phone number for all job search contact.
- Two to four hours a week, in your calendar.

# Common mistakes

▪ Sending the same CV everywhere. Tailor it to each advert. It takes longer, and it's how you get read.

▪ Only answering adverts. Many jobs are filled through people. Keep contacting employers and people directly.

▪ Applying to anything. Hold each job against what you wrote in week 1. A different job isn't the same as a better one.

▪ Stopping while you wait. Keep applying until you've accepted an offer in writing, even while interviews are going well.

▪ Talking pay too early. Wait for an offer before you bring it up, and know the typical range before you do.

▪ Resigning too soon. Wait until the offer is in writing and any conditions, such as references or checks, have been met.

# The offer and your first day

▪ When an offer comes, thank them, say you're keen, and ask for at least 24 hours to decide, even if you plan to say yes.

▪ Check it against your week 1 notes: pay, hours, the work, the commute, room to grow. Some benefits, such as flexible hours or training, can be worth more to you than a little more pay.

▪ Negotiate once, politely. The first offer often has some room. Ask based on what you'd bring and the typical range, not on what you need.

▪ Accept in writing, then resign in writing. Get the pay, hours, start date and any conditions in writing. If the offer depends on references or checks, wait until they're done before you hand in your notice. Agree your last day, and leave on good terms.

▪ Before your first day, confirm the time, place, who to ask for and what to bring. Write down what you want to learn in your first month. The Earn more plan can help you keep growing your pay from here.

# If you fall behind

**Missed 1 week:** Carry on with this week. Follow up anything over two weeks old, but don't try to send a double batch of applications.

**Missed 2 weeks:** Do the next week you haven't done. If that runs past your finish date, leave out a keep-going or lighter week, never the preparation weeks or the last three.

**Missed 4 weeks:** Do a review week first: count your results, check your CV and target list are still right, and follow up anything waiting. Then carry on, and move your finish date on by four weeks.

**Missed 8 or more weeks:** Reread what you wrote in week 1 and check it still holds. Choose the level and week that match where you are today, and set a new finish date on the plan page.

# Sources


**The Ohio State University, Office of Student Life**
`https://careerguide.osu.edu/career-search`
“The average job search may take somewhere around five to six months from application to hiring.”

**The Ohio State University, Office of Student Life**
`https://careerguide.osu.edu/career-search`
“If not, and you have not received a response after two weeks, send a follow-up email to the email address listed on the job description.”

**The Ohio State University, Office of Student Life**
`https://careerguide.osu.edu/career-search`
“You can probably expect the interview process for each company to require between three and five weeks.”

**West Chester University, Twardowski Career Development Center**
`https://www.wcupa.edu/_services/careerDevelopment/alumni/jobSearch.aspx`
“While there is no set period that applies to every person, on average you should plan on 3 months of active engagement in your job hunt before an opportunity turns into an offer.”

**West Chester University, Twardowski Career Development Center**
`https://www.wcupa.edu/_services/careerDevelopment/alumni/jobSearch.aspx`
“If you are already employed but looking to make a change in your current company or to find a new opportunity, you could need to keep a low profile during the search.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Plan/create-a-job-search-plan.aspx`
“If your resume needs an update, add current accomplishment statements, delete your oldest experience if it’s outdated, ask at least two people to review it and provide feedback.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Plan/create-a-job-search-plan.aspx`
“Check out company websites and create a list of 8-10 companies to reach out to for job inquiries.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Plan/create-a-job-search-plan.aspx`
“Aim to contact 1-2 businesses every week.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/informational-interviews.aspx`
“The focus is on learning information to help you make a career decision, not about getting a job offer.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/informational-interviews.aspx`
“Limit the meeting to 15 - 30 minutes based on the agreed-on time.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Interview/negotiate-your-salary.aspx`
“Start by expressing your appreciation and strong interest in the job, and then request at least 24 hours to decide.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Interview/negotiate-your-salary.aspx`
“Note that you should wait to ask about salary until you receive a job offer.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Interview/negotiate-your-salary.aspx`
“In many cases, the first offer has negotiating room.”

**National Careers Service (UK)**
`https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/cv-sections`
“You should tailor your CV to the job or opportunity you’re applying for.”

**National Careers Service (UK)**
`https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice`
“The STAR method helps you to answer interview questions fully.”

**National Careers Service (UK)**
`https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice`
“Remember that it’s common to attend a few interviews before being offered a role.”

**National Careers Service (UK)**
`https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice`
“You can also ask the interviewer for feedback on how it went and where you could have done better.”

**Job Bank (Government of Canada)**
`https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning`
“A self-assessment can help you set goals and identify the skills you need for your next job or career move.”

**Job Bank (Government of Canada)**
`https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning`
“In Canada, many job vacancies are not advertised by employers.”

**Job Bank (Government of Canada)**
`https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning`
“These positions are usually filled informally through word of mouth.”

**GOV.UK, Job offers: your rights**
`https://www.gov.uk/job-offers-your-rights`
“Employees should wait until they get an unconditional offer before handing in their notice as a conditional offer could fall through.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/networking.aspx`
“Studies show that about half of all new jobs are found through connections.”

**CareerOneStop (US Department of Labor)**
`https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/networking.aspx`
“Many job openings are not even posted by employers, so networking is the only way to find these hidden jobs.”

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|---|---|
| **This plan online** | `https://goaltodo.com/find-a-better-job` |
| **Reach it with others on Welang** | `https://welang.com/goals/find-a-better-job` |
| **Reach it on your own in HourLife** | `https://www.hourlife.com` |