Your Job Search Workbook

How to use this workbook

Work through the parts in order: the first four decide *where* to aim, the last four get you hired there. Most people rush to the resume; the strongest searches spend the first two weeks on Parts 1–4.

Phase	Parts	Typical time	Output you walk away with
Discover	1. Know yourself	3–5 hours	Your skills, values and must-haves on one page
Decide	2–3. Industries and job types	4–6 hours	A shortlist of 2–3 industries and 2–3 role types
Validate	4. Test before you commit	1–2 weeks	5+ conversations and a 25-company target list
Prepare	5. Materials	4–8 hours	Positioning statement, resume, LinkedIn
Execute	6–8. Search, interview, stay steady	6–16 weeks	Interviews, offers, a decision

What you need: a notebook or this document open to edit, your current resume, LinkedIn, and 30–60 minutes a day of protected time.

How to fill it in: type straight into the tables and tick the boxes. Write fast and honestly first, then edit. A blank answer is a signal too: it usually marks the thing you need to find out next.

- ☐ I've blocked time on my calendar for this week's work
- ☐ I have my resume and LinkedIn open

Part 1 — Know yourself

The best-fit job sits where your strongest skills, your real interests and your non-negotiables overlap. These four exercises map each one.

Exercise 1.1 — Accomplishment inventory

List 6–8 accomplishments from any part of your life (work, school, volunteering, side projects) that you're proud of. Then name the skills each one used. Skills that appear 3+ times are your core strengths.

Accomplishment (what happened, with a number if possible)	Skills I used	Did I enjoy it? (Yes / Somewhat / No)

My top 5 recurring skills: _____

Exercise 1.2 — Energy audit

For one week, notice which tasks give you energy and which drain you. Being good at something you hate is a trap; this exercise finds it.

Energizes me	Neutral	Drains me

Exercise 1.3 — Values and work style

Rate each from 1 (doesn't matter) to 5 (essential). Bold your top three; they become filters in Parts 2 and 3.

Factor	Rating (1–5)	Notes
Compensation and earning ceiling		
Job security and stability		

Factor	Rating (1–5)	Notes
Mission or social impact		
Autonomy and independence		
Learning and growth		
Prestige or recognition		
Flexibility (remote, hours)		
Team and collaboration		
Pace (steady vs. fast-moving)		
Creativity and variety		
Clear structure and process		
Leadership and influence		

Work style quick check — mark where you sit on each line:

- People-facing ←→ Heads-down, independent work
- Big-picture strategy ←→ Detail and execution
- Variety every day ←→ Depth and routine
- Build new things ←→ Improve and run existing things
- Data and analysis ←→ Words and relationships

Exercise 1.4 — Must-haves and deal-breakers

Must-haves (I won't accept less)	Nice-to-haves	Deal-breakers
Minimum salary:		
Location / remote:		
Schedule:		

Part 1 summary — complete this sentence: I do my best work when I use _____ and _____, in an environment that offers _____, and I won't consider roles that _____.

Part 2 — Find your best-fit industries

Industry shapes your pay, pace, culture and job security more than most people expect: the same accountant has a very different life at a hospital, a startup and a law firm. Narrow to 2–3 industries before you apply anywhere.

Exercise 2.1 — Interest clues

Answer quickly. Patterns across your answers point to industries.

Question	My answer
What topics do I read about or watch for fun?	
Which problems in the world annoy me enough to want to fix them?	
Which companies' products or services do I admire, and why?	
What did past managers or friends say I'm a natural at?	
Which industries have I already worked in or near (as an employee, customer or volunteer)?	
If money were equal, where would I want to spend my days?	

Industry map

Use this as a starting point, then mark the 5–6 that match your Part 1 profile.

Industry	Tends to suit people who value	Common roles	Pace and culture	Shortlist? (Y/N)
Technology and software	Growth, innovation, earning upside	Product, engineering, sales, customer success, data	Fast, changing, often flexible	
Healthcare and life sciences	Mission, stability, problem-solving	Clinical, operations, research, administration, compliance	Structured, regulated, steady demand	
Financial services and banking	Compensation, structure, analysis	Analyst, advisor, risk, operations, relationship management	Demanding, hierarchical, well paid	
Legal and professional services	Expertise, prestige, client work	Attorney, paralegal, consultant, accountant, business development, marketing	Deadline-driven, client-first	
Government and public sector	Security, impact, benefits	Policy, program management, administration, analysis	Steady, process-heavy, strong benefits	
Nonprofit and education	Mission, community, purpose	Program, fundraising, teaching, operations	Mission-driven, lean budgets	
Manufacturing, energy and construction	Tangible results, operations	Engineering, supply chain, project management, safety	Practical, process-focused	

Industry	Tends to suit people who value	Common roles	Pace and culture	Shortlist? (Y/N)
Retail, consumer and hospitality	People, variety, brand	Marketing, merchandising, store and guest operations	Fast, customer-facing, seasonal	
Media, marketing and creative	Creativity, recognition, variety	Content, design, brand, communications	Project-based, competitive	
Real estate and property	Independence, relationships, earning upside	Brokerage, property management, development, finance	Entrepreneurial, cyclical	
Logistics and transportation	Problem-solving, systems, reliability	Operations, planning, fleet, procurement	Round-the-clock, metrics-driven	

Exercise 2.2 — Industry scoring matrix

Score your top 4 industries from 1 to 5 on each factor. Weight your top three values from Exercise 1.3 by doubling those rows. The highest total is your lead target; the second and third are your backups.

Factor	Weight (1 or 2)	Industry A: ____	Industry B: ____	Industry C: ____	Industry D: ____
Genuine interest in the work					
Uses my top skills					
Matches my values					
Hiring demand in my area / remotely					
Pay meets my must-have					
My existing network there					
Transferable experience I already have					
Long-term outlook					
Weighted total					

Where to check hiring demand: the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook shows pay, growth and entry requirements by occupation; job-board counts for your city show near-term demand.

My target industries: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Part 3 — Find your best-fit job types

A job type (the *function*) decides what you actually do all day, so it matters as much as the industry. Most functions exist in every industry, which means one strong function choice opens doors in all three of your target industries.

Function families

Match your top skills and energy audit to these families. Mark up to three that fit.

Function family	Core activity	Suits people who are energized by	Example titles	Fit? (Strong / Maybe / No)
Sales and business development	Winning new clients and revenue	Persuasion, competition, relationships, variable pay	Account executive, BD manager, client partner	
Client and customer success	Keeping clients happy and growing	Service, problem-solving, long relationships	Account manager, customer success manager	
Marketing and communications	Shaping how the market sees you	Creativity, storytelling, data on what works	Marketing manager, content lead, communications director	
Operations	Making the engine run well	Process, efficiency, fixing what's broken	Operations manager, COO, office manager	
Finance and accounting	Tracking and planning money	Accuracy, analysis, structure	Financial analyst, controller, CFO	
Human resources and talent	Hiring, developing and keeping people	People, fairness, coaching	Recruiter, HR business partner, talent director	
Technology and data	Building and running systems	Logic, building, learning new tools	Developer, data analyst, IT manager	
Product and project management	Getting the right thing built on time	Coordination, prioritizing, cross-team work	Project manager, product manager, program lead	
Legal, risk and compliance	Protecting the organization	Rules, detail, judgment	Counsel, compliance officer, contracts manager	
Creative and design	Making things people see and use	Visual or written craft, variety	Designer, writer, UX researcher	
Research and analysis	Finding answers in information	Curiosity, depth, independent work	Analyst, researcher, strategist	
Leadership and general management	Setting direction and running a unit	Influence, decisions, accountability	Director, general manager, managing partner	

Exercise 3.1 — Role archetype check

Within any function, roles lean toward one of four archetypes. Pick the one that sounds most like your best days.

- ☐ **Builder** — starts new things from scratch; thrives on ambiguity (startups, new programs, launches)
- ☐ **Operator** — makes existing things run better; loves process and metrics

- ☐ **Advisor** — the expert others come to; depth over breadth
- ☐ **Connector** — works through relationships; clients, partners, teams

Exercise 3.2 — Industry × function shortlist

Combine your answers. Each cell is a possible target role. Score each 1–5 for fit, then bold the top three combinations to test in Part 4.

Function ↓ / Industry →	Industry 1: ____	Industry 2: ____	Industry 3: ____
Function A: ____			
Function B: ____			
Function C: ____			

Exercise 3.3 — Level and gap check

For each of your top three combinations, be honest about readiness.

Target role	Level I'm ready for now	Gaps (skills, credentials, experience)	How I'd close each gap	Time to close

Rule of thumb: if you meet about 70% of a posting's requirements, apply. Close gaps that block you from interviews; let the rest come on the job.

My top three target roles: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Part 4 — Test before you commit

Five conversations with people already doing your target roles will teach you more than fifty job postings. Aim for at least two per target role before you build your materials.

Exercise 4.1 — Informational interviews

How to ask (adapt this): "Hi [Name], I'm exploring a move into [role] in [industry] and your path stood out. Would you be open to a 20-minute call in the next couple of weeks? I'd value your perspective on what the work is really like."

Questions worth asking:

1. What does a typical week actually look like?
2. What separates people who thrive here from those who leave?
3. What surprised you most about this role or industry?
4. Which skills or experience matter most when hiring?
5. Given my background, where would I fit, and what would you do in my place?
6. Who else should I talk to?

Name	Role / company	How I found them	Date	Key insight	Fit for me? (Up / Down / Same)	Thank-you sent

Exercise 4.2 — Low-risk test drives

If you're still unsure, try the work before committing:

- ☐ Take a short online course or certificate in the field
- ☐ Volunteer or do a small freelance project in that function
- ☐ Attend an industry association event or webinar
- ☐ Shadow someone for half a day
- ☐ Read three recent trade-publication articles and note what problems the industry is wrestling with

Exercise 4.3 — Target company list

Build a list of 25 companies across your target industries. Mix sizes and include a few "reach" names. Tier A = dream, B = strong fit, C = good practice.

Company	Industry	Size	Why it fits me	Tier (A/B/C)	Contacts I have

Decision check: after your conversations, do your target roles still score highest? If one dropped, swap it now. Changing direction here costs days; changing it after you've applied costs months.

Part 5 — Build your materials

Every document you write should point at your target roles from Part 3. A resume aimed at everything reads as aimed at nothing.

Exercise 5.1 — Positioning statement

One or two sentences you'll reuse in your LinkedIn headline, resume summary, networking and the "tell me about yourself" answer.

Formula: I'm a [function / title] with [X years] in [industry or setting], known for [top 1–2 strengths]. I'm looking to bring that to [target role] in [target industry], where I can [the value you create].

My draft: _____

Test it: read it aloud. Would someone in your target role nod, or ask "so what do you actually do?"

Exercise 5.2 — Turn duties into results

Rewrite your resume bullets using: **Action verb + what you did + measurable result.**

Old bullet (duty)	New bullet (result)
Responsible for client onboarding	Onboarded 40+ clients a year, cutting setup time from 3 weeks to 9 days

No hard number? Use scale (team size, budget, volume), frequency or a before-and-after.

Resume checklist

- ☐ Summary at the top uses my positioning statement
- ☐ Every bullet in my last two roles shows a result
- ☐ Keywords from 3–5 target postings appear naturally
- ☐ One to two pages; simple layout that applicant tracking systems can read
- ☐ Saved as both Word and PDF; file named FirstName-LastName-Resume
- ☐ Proofread by someone else

LinkedIn checklist

- ☐ Headline says what I do and what I'm aiming for, not just my current title
- ☐ Professional photo and a banner image
- ☐ About section: 3 short paragraphs in my own voice, ending with what I'm looking for
- ☐ Experience entries match my resume results
- ☐ Skills section lists my top skills from Part 1
- ☐ "Open to work" set (visible to recruiters only, if I'm still employed)

- ☐ Following my Tier A companies

Cover letter template (when one is required)

1. **Hook** — why this company, specifically (one sentence that proves you did your homework)
2. **Match** — two of their stated needs, each paired with a result of yours
3. **Close** — enthusiasm and a clear next step

Part 6 — Run the search

Treat the search like a part-time job with weekly targets. Spread your effort across channels: referrals and direct outreach convert to interviews far more often than cold online applications, so don't let job boards eat all your time.

Search channels

Channel	Best for	Suggested share of effort
Referrals and your network	Warm introductions; skipping the resume pile	40%
Direct outreach to hiring managers	Tier A companies; roles not yet posted	20%
Recruiters and search firms	Mid-to-senior roles; specialized fields	15%
Online postings (LinkedIn, Indeed, company sites)	Volume; seeing who's hiring	20%
Events and associations	Meeting people in a new industry	5%

Working with recruiters: be clear about your target roles, pay range and deal-breakers from Part 1. Specialist recruiters in your target industry are worth more than generalists, and they want candidates who know what they're looking for.

Weekly rhythm

Activity	Weekly target	Done this week
Tailored applications	5–10	
New networking conversations	3–5	
Follow-ups on earlier contacts	5	
Direct outreach to Tier A companies	3	
LinkedIn posts or comments in my field	2	
Skill-building (course, reading, project)	2 hours	

Application tracker

One row per opportunity. Follow up 7–10 days after applying if you've heard nothing. Stage: Researching / Applied / Screen / Interviewing / Offer / Closed.

Company	Role	Date applied	Source / referral	Contact	Stage	Next step and date

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Outreach note template

“Hi [Name], I’ve followed [company]’s work on [specific thing] and I’m targeting [role type] roles where I can bring [your top strength, with one result]. I’d welcome 15 minutes to learn how your team approaches [relevant topic]. Is there a good time in the next week or two?”

Part 7 — Interview and offer

Interviews reward preparation more than talent: 6–8 well-rehearsed stories will answer most behavioral questions you'll face.

Exercise 7.1 — Story bank (STAR method)

For each story: **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction (what *you* did), **R**esult (with a number). Draw from your Part 1 accomplishments.

Theme	Situation and task	Action I took	Result
A major achievement			
Leading or influencing others			
Handling conflict or a difficult person			
A failure and what I learned			
Solving a hard problem			
Working under pressure or tight deadlines			
Adapting to change			
Going beyond what was asked			

Before each interview

- ☐ Researched the company's recent news, strategy and competitors
- ☐ Looked up my interviewers on LinkedIn
- ☐ Matched 3 of my stories to the job's top requirements
- ☐ Practiced "tell me about yourself" (90 seconds, built on my positioning statement)
- ☐ Prepared an answer to "why this role and why now?"
- ☐ Prepared 3–5 questions for them
- ☐ Know my salary range and how I'll answer the pay question

Strong questions to ask them: What would success look like in the first 90 days? What's the biggest challenge facing this team? Why is this role open? How would you describe the culture to a friend?

After each interview

- ☐ Thank-you note within 24 hours, referencing something specific from the conversation
- ☐ Notes: what went well, what to tighten, any concerns about the role

Exercise 7.2 — Evaluating an offer

Compare the full package, not just base salary, and check it against your Part 1 must-haves.

Factor	Offer A: ____	Offer B: ____	Current job / walk-away
Base salary			

Factor	Offer A: ____	Offer B: ____	Current job / walk-away
Bonus and incentives			
Equity or profit share			
Health and retirement benefits			
Paid time off			
Remote / flexibility			
Title and growth path			
Manager and team			
Matches my top 3 values			
Any deal-breakers?			

Negotiating: most employers expect a counter-offer. Thank them, express enthusiasm, then ask for specifics backed by market data or a competing offer. If base pay is fixed, negotiate signing bonus, start date, title, remote days or a pay review in 6 months. Get the final terms in writing before you resign.

Part 8 — Stay resilient

Rejection is the normal cost of a search, not a verdict on you. Track your effort, which you control, rather than outcomes, which you don't.

Weekly review (15 minutes every Friday)

Question	This week
What did I accomplish against my weekly targets?	
Which channel produced the most responses?	
What feedback or pattern am I seeing?	
What will I change next week?	
One win to recognize, however small	

If you're stuck, diagnose where

Symptom	Likely cause	Fix
Lots of applications, no responses	Resume isn't matching the roles, or targets are too broad	Revisit Parts 3 and 5; tailor harder; lean on referrals
Screens but no second interviews	Positioning or stories aren't landing	Rehearse your story bank out loud; get mock-interview feedback
Final rounds but no offers	Fit concerns, references, or pay mismatch	Ask for feedback; check references; clarify pay early
Interviews for roles you don't want	Targets drifted	Re-read your Part 1 summary and must-haves

Protect your energy

- Keep a fixed start and stop time for search work each day
- Stay connected: an accountability partner or weekly check-in helps
- Keep one thing in your week that has nothing to do with the search
- Celebrate effort milestones (10 conversations, 25 applications), not only offers

Final checklist

- ☐ Part 1 summary sentence written
- ☐ Top 2–3 industries chosen and scored
- ☐ Top 3 target roles chosen, gaps identified
- ☐ 5+ informational interviews completed
- ☐ 25-company target list built
- ☐ Positioning statement, resume and LinkedIn updated
- ☐ Application tracker running and weekly rhythm in place
- ☐ Story bank of 6–8 STAR stories rehearsed
- ☐ Offer comparison done before accepting
- ☐ Thanked everyone who helped, and told them where I landed