

## Job Search Checklist

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### Preparation Phase

#### Update your resume

- Use a conservative resume template. Don't use "funky fonts" and don't include personal details like hobbies.
- The title should match the job listing: Technical Writer; Technical Communicator; Information Architect, etc. Use the largest font for this.
- Prepare several versions (one for each position you are applying for). You may need different versions in Word, PDF, and Text (to embed in emails).
- Don't forget to include your participation in "**Become a Technical Writer**". To help, there is example text in the Marketing module.

#### Test your resume

- Show your resume to several people and get their suggestions.
- Consider paying to have a professional rework it for you (\$200-300). This is especially helpful if your resume is longer than one page.
- Send it to a staffing agency for technical writers (e.g., [Writing Assistance Inc.](#)) with a request to review it: "I've recently made a career change to Technical Writer. Would you mind reviewing it to see if it meets your expectations?"

#### Define your limits

- Consider geographic preferences, salary, and job type. Don't apply for jobs that don't fit your limits.

#### Understand and use your network

- Using [LinkedIn.com](#) first, list everyone you know (categorize and prioritize).
- Polish your LinkedIn.com profile. Employers often look this up first. Include a good headshot if you have one.
- Create an "incognito" or "private" page in your browser and search for yourself. Delete anything that doesn't align with the image you'd like to portray to a future employer. Be objective or ask a friend for help with this.

#### Be organized and use a record keeping system

- Set up an appointment calendar (Google integrates with most meeting invites).
- There are great free tools to track calls/messages, companies/people contacted, resumes sent, responses received, meeting and phone call notes, interviews, thank you notes, etc. Examples include [Airtable](#) and [Evernote](#).
- Keep daily and weekly goals. Measure applications rather than interviews, which you can't control.

#### Contact any references

- Contact professional and personal references about your career plans. Offer them generously in each application (they aren't necessary in your resume).

### Practice your "reasons for career change" speech

- If you plan to leave your current job, prepare a professional email explaining why. Save it as a draft. This will help organize your thoughts.
- Practice so you can speak about the change fluently.

### Prepare cover letters

- Avoid long-winded, formulaic approaches. Try one or two paragraphs (at most).
- Research the company and mention something sincere at the start. This gets noticed! "Me, my, I, my, me" are quickly tedious for hiring managers.
- Use [hemingwayapp.com](http://hemingwayapp.com) to shorten your sentences and paragraphs. Go for grade eight level at the most. Sixth grade is perfect.

### Set up e-mail and voicemail

- If you can, invest in your own domain name and a corresponding email service (e.g., Google, for \$7 a month or a domain host, which might be cheaper).
- Create a good email signature. As an example:

Kind regards,

Joe Schlobotnik  
Technical Writer  
C: 201-341-9191  
E: [techwriter@joeschlobotnik.com](mailto:techwriter@joeschlobotnik.com)  
Detroit, MI  
Open to travel or relocation

- Whether you buy a domain name or use [techwriter2123@gmail.com](mailto:techwriter2123@gmail.com), use this exclusively for job communications. It's easier to manage if you're not mixing this with newsletters, personal bills, etc (and you'll likely receive spam!).
- Check and professionalize your voicemail message.

### Double check your portfolio

- Polish your portfolio. It should be your best work. Any descriptions should be helpful but not wordy/chatty.
- Display your email address and/or contact form prominently. If you include an "About" page, keep it professional.
- Ask Bobby Kennedy to review it.
- Ask friends, colleagues, and other classmates in "**Become a Technical Writer**" to review it.

## Passive Job Search

- Register with job search sites, such as Dice.com, Indeed.com, Ziprecruiter.com, Careerbuilder.com (if in the USA).
- Create an agent/alert for each site, preferably multiple, perhaps by city. For example: Technical Writer, Orlando; Technical Writer, Miami.
- If you live near a city, add any extra job search sites in the categories below:
  - Conventional (resume sites, networking sites).
  - Unconventional (local/regional directories, e.g., Build NYC).
  - "Guerrilla" (Google alerts, direct marketing to companies).
- Sign up for [Google Alerts](#). Get creative and adjust them to increase their effectiveness. For example: Remote Technical Writer, Canada.

## Active Job Search

- Consider joining STC.org *if you have a good local chapter* (chapters vary in activity and quality).
- Join a career-orientated support group (e.g., meetup.org).
- Run active searches using the sites listed above by varying some keywords. (For example, try Technical Communicator instead of Technical Writer.)
- Do the same with LinkedIn.com and any regional sites on your list (see Passive Job Search).
- Keep your information updated as changes happen with you and the job market.
- Attend practice interviews as part of the “**Become a Technical Writer**” course.
- Practice interview questions and answers.
- Consider open source (volunteer work).
- Check the “Write the Docs” job board regularly (on Slack).

## Weekly Tasks

- E-mails, letters, and thank you notes (especially after interviews).
- Update and review your job search plan.
- Update your list of tasks to be completed.
- Update your weekly calendar.
- Take part in any other relevant networking activities.

## Daily Tasks

- Check e-mail several times a day.
- Conduct active internet job searches.
- Check job postings on target company websites.