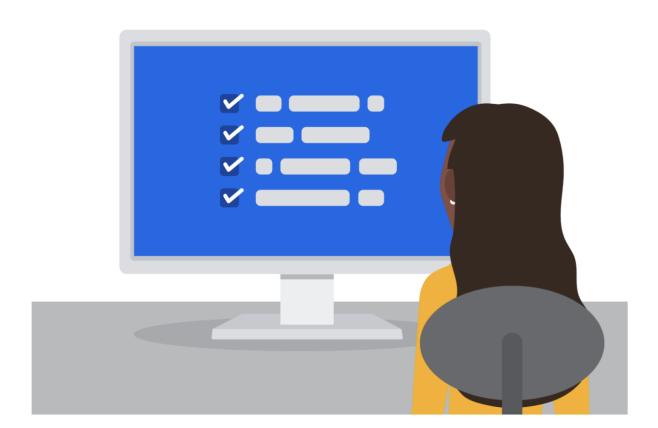# How to uncover job opportunities

Starting a new career means not only developing a new skill set but also learning how to relate your previous experience and skills to the new role you're pursuing. If you're ready to start your journey on a new career path, this reading will help you position yourself for success in your job search. You'll learn how to understand what your potential employer is looking for and how to connect your background to their needs. The strategies outlined below are designed to help you become a strong job candidate, even if you don't have directly relevant experience.

The first step is to fully understand the role you're targeting.

Understand your target role

One of the primary challenges for anyone looking to launch a new career is how to stand out against candidates who already have experience in the field. Overcoming this challenge begins with developing a comprehensive understanding of the role you're targeting. You'll need to understand the role in the context of any company you're applying to, and more broadly as well. Having a holistic understanding of what it takes to succeed in your target role will help you determine your suitability for the role, and identify any steps you can take to improve your chances of getting hired.

To understand everything from minimum must-have requirements to skills that might help you stand out from the crowd, you can begin by researching and analyzing job descriptions across different organizations.

Below you'll find our recommended strategy for how to approach this process effectively.

Analyze job listings

The first part of the process is to gather information from multiple job listings:

- **Pull up ten job descriptions for your target role**. To do this, you can use job boards like Indeed, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn. Make sure the roles you select come from different companies, share similar titles, and are roles you would actually apply for. In each job description, you should be able to identify a section listing requirements for the role.

- **Combine all the job requirements**. To do this, create a new Google document and copy over all the required responsibilities from all ten job descriptions.

- **Order requirements based on appearance frequency.** Certain requirements will likely appear in multiple descriptions. The more commonly they appear, the more likely it is that they're essential for the role. Put the most frequently appearing requirements at the top of your list. For example, a requirement that appears in all ten descriptions would go at the very top.

After completing these steps, you should have a clearer picture of which requirements are most common and important for the role. You may also have questions:

- **Why do requirements differ across job descriptions?**
  One of the most common reasons for this has to do with overly general job titles, or job titles that don't necessarily communicate the specific scope of a given role at a particular company. For example, a program manager at one company might be focused on customer management, while at another company, the emphasis might be on project management. A Data Analyst might primarily use SQL at one company and Python at another. Because of these differences, it's important to look beyond job titles. This is why we recommend the process outlined above—to help ensure you're targeting the exact roles that are right for you—and that you understand the requirements for those exact roles.

- **Why are some requirements higher on my list than I thought they would be, while others I expected to see barely show up at all?**
  If you're surprised by your results, you may need to spend more time learning what the role really entails, as you may have some preconceptions about the role that require adjusting. You might also need to do additional research to ensure you're targeting the right roles in your job search.

- **How do I know if I'm really right for my target role?**
  It's perfectly normal to experience self-doubt at this stage of the process. Remember, this is a new career for you. You're not expected to know everything about the role, and it's likely that your existing skills and experience won't line up perfectly. The more you learn about the role, the better you'll understand what's required for success, and the more you'll know about how to prepare yourself for that success.

Create your professional inventory

For this next step, you can temporarily set aside the master list of role requirements you previously created. The focus here will be on your existing professional qualifications, and any other skills or experience you possess that might be relevant to your target role and of value to a potential employer.

To begin, assemble a comprehensive list of the following:

- **Technical (hard) skills**. These are skills relating to a specific task or situation such as programming, technical writing, project management, and more.

- **Non-technical (interpersonal) skills.** These are the skills that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. They include skills like communication, leadership, team management, and more.

- **Personal qualities.** These are positive attributes and personality traits such as being honest, having a good sense of humor, and being dependable. You can also include your professional interests on this list.

- **Education.** This includes any post-secondary education, certifications, or independent classes completed online or offline.

Tip: You do not need to limit your professional inventory to skills and qualities developed through professional experience. Consider any volunteer, extracurricular, or personal experiences that might help a hiring manager understand your capabilities.

Once you've created your inventory of skills and experience, you're ready to line these up against your requirements list.

Match your profile to the job requirements

The concluding step in this process is to match your profile to the job requirements. The goal here is to make it easy for any hiring manager to see why you're a great fit for their role. You'll accomplish this by learning what to emphasize and focus on in your search, on your resume, and during interviews.

To begin, go through your professional inventory of skills and experience, highlighting each item in green, orange, or red, depending on its relevance to your target role. Relevance is determined by whether a given skill appears on your role requirements list, how high it appears on your list, and how directly it aligns with your list.

For example, let's say you're interested in a program manager role. If you're skilled at using project management software, and project management software skills are high on your job requirements list, then highlight that item in green. If you have some experience with tools that do not consistently show up on job descriptions but could still be relevant, highlight these skills in orange.

- **Green** should be used for skills that are directly relevant to your target role. You should look for roles that emphasize these skills. You should also highlight these skills on your resume, and be prepared to discuss them in an interview.

- **Orange** should be used to identify those skills and experiences that are relevant for the role but not necessarily in a direct way. These are generally your transferable skills—skills that you bring with you from past experiences that can help you succeed in your new role. Plan to have to explain these to recruiters and hiring managers, as their relevance may not be immediately evident.

- **Red** should be used for items that are not relevant for your job search. De-prioritize these skills, and steer clear of highlighting them on your resume and focusing on them during interviews.

Of these three categories, the orange items are where you'll need to focus extra attention. When it comes to transferable skills, you have to do the convincing, as you can't count on a recruiter or hiring manager making the connection. For example, no job description for a project manager role calls for waitstaff experience. However, that project manager job description will likely mention excellent communication skills—which you would have developed during your hospitality career. When applying for the project manager role, make sure your resume specifically mentions excellent communication in addition to listing "waiter" or "waitress" as your previous occupation. Once you've categorized your skills and experience based on how well they align with the requirements for your target role, you're ready to move your job search forward.