

Don't have much experience? Here's how to boost your résumé.

It's one of the most frustrating experiences any job seeker faces: After a rigorous search, you've found a job that you're really excited about, where you'll work on interesting things with like-minded people and in a great location. The catch? The job requires experience, often more than you have under your belt. As disheartening as this situation is, it isn't necessarily the end of the line.

Here are some ways you can boost your résumé to help you secure your dream job:

Become an intern

Many colleges and universities require students to complete an internship prior to graduation. This might lead some to believe that internships are only for students, which is untrue. Some internship programs do require that their interns receive class credit, but those typically are unpaid and rely on the class credits as compensation. Many paid internships have no student-status requirements or age limitations. Internships offer excellent experience and networking opportunities, and they can often lead to a full-time job offer.

Volunteer

Experience doesn't have to come from a job. While volunteer work is mainly associated with altruism, there's no reason it can't benefit your career! Doing nonprofit work that is associated with your education and your desired job is a great way to hone your skills, gain real-world experience, and acquire skills and knowledge that can transfer to any field.

Keep learning

Just because you've received your high school equivalency credential, it doesn't mean that you're done learning. One question employers commonly ask in a job interview is how you've been spending your time. Telling them you've been sleeping late and filling out the occasional application isn't going to make you stand out. However, talking about continuing-education classes or industry-related seminars you've attended, and discussing how they relate to the position, will likely make a lasting impression.

Strengthen your cover letter

The cover letter is your opportunity to explain to an employer how your experience measures up to the company's needs. Highlight similarities between work you've done and the work that will be required in the open position. Smart employers don't make their hiring decisions based on years of experience alone. This is your chance to sell them on why your specific experiences make you uniquely suited for the job.