

Here's how to Pack Your Parachute

The following adaptation from Richard Bolles's "What Color Is Your Parachute?" demonstrates what has changed -- and what hasn't changed -- in the art and science of looking for a job that suits your interests and skills.

The Five Best Ways to Find a Job

1. Ask for job leads from family members, friends, people in the community, and staff at career centers. Ask them this one simple question: Do you know of any jobs in my field? That method has a 33% success rate.
2. Knock on the doors of any employers, factories, or offices that interest you, whether or not they have vacancies. That method has a 47% success rate.
3. Use the Yellow Pages to identify areas that interest you in or near the town or city where you live and then call the employers in that field to find out whether they are hiring for the position that you can do -- and do well. That method has a 69% success rate.
4. In a group with other job hunters, implement method #3 (above). That method has an 84% success rate.
5. Do thorough homework on yourself. Know your best skills, in order of priority. Know the fields in which you want to use those skills. Talk to people who have those kinds of jobs. Find out whether they're happy, and how they found their jobs. Then choose the places where you want to work, rather than just those places that have advertised job openings. Thoroughly research these organizations before approaching them. Seek out the person who actually has the power to hire you for the job that you want. Demonstrate to that person how you can help the company with its problems. Cut no corners; take no shortcuts. That method has an 86% success rate.

The Five Worst Ways to Find a Job

1. Randomly mail out résumés to employers. That method has a 7% success rate. (One study revealed that there is one job offer for every 1,470 résumés floating around out there. Another study puts the figure even higher -- one job offer for every 1,700 résumés.)
2. Answer ads in professional or trade journals appropriate to your field. That method also has only a 7% success rate.
3. Answer ads in newspapers in other parts of the state or country. That method has a 10% success rate.
4. Answer ads in local newspapers. That method has a 5% to 24% success rate. (The higher the salary, the smaller the chance of finding a job using that method.)
5. Go to private employment agencies for help. This method also has a 5% to 24% success rate, again, depending on the salary you want. (In a recent study, 27.8% of female job hunters found jobs within two months by going to private employment agencies.)