

## **Nine Tips for Starting Out or Starting Over**

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Whether you're a new graduate or career changer, starting a career takes a lot of motivation and energy. If you're confident and know what you want, taking that first step is easy. But if you don't know where to begin or if you dread making that initial move, starting out -- or starting over -- is much more difficult. These tips will help get you going.

**1. Have Your Hair Styled or Cut.** Good grooming is essential to making a good first impression. You may find looking good makes you feel good and gives you confidence.

**2. Shop for an Interview Outfit.** You'll need clothes for your interviews. Why not buy now and be prepared? Just as having your hair styled may jump-start your search, investing in the right outfit is another way to gain a professional edge.

**3. Get Reconnected.** If you've put off your search, chances are you've also withdrawn from family and friends. You may have avoided them, because you hate answering the question, "Have you found a job yet?" Give up thinking that you need to land a job on your own. No one succeeds alone. Get reconnected to stop cutting yourself off from the very people who care and can help.

**4. Visit a Large Bookstore.** Browse the career sections of large bookstores, where you can review the latest books on career fields. Other publications, such as the book *Odd Jobs: Portraits of Unusual Occupations*, highlight interesting jobs and unusual small businesses.

**5. Take Vocational Tests.** If you still don't have a clue about what you want with respect to your career, invest in vocational testing. Many vocational tests, now available online, help you identify career values and employment options. Some, like the Strong Interest Inventory and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, require you to contact a career counselor. Others are self-tests, like the Holland Self-Directed Search and the Values Identification Inventory. You can also check out JASPER, Monster's Job Assets & Strengths Profiler.

**6. See a Career Counselor.** If you prefer talking things out or want individual attention (and who doesn't?), find a qualified career counselor to help you sort through your interests and make plans. A career counselor will help you focus your goals, prepare your resume and prep for interviews.

**7. Surf the Net.** Use Monster to find jobs, research companies and ask experts your career-related questions.

**8. Join a Professional or Trade Association.** This is a great way to find a wealth of information on your field and keep abreast of trends and salaries. Most associations also have job banks. And don't say you can't afford it. If you want to be successful, you need to pay your dues -- literally. In return, you'll find an easy way to get connected and gain support from people who share your ideas and values. If you want an inside track and an easy way to network, this is the place to start.

**9. Trust the Process.** A ball gathers momentum once it starts rolling. A job search is the same way. Once you begin, you'll find opportunities and eventually receive offers. So take your pick -- there are lots of ways to start.