



A Guide to Navigating Your First Engineering Job

Introduction

This guide offers insights, advice and strategies to navigate your job search with the ultimate goal of landing a job. Follow this guideline to plan and stay on track with your job search and refer to our other resources to master your resume, cover letter and interviewing skills.



Set A Goal

Before you start applying, it is a good idea to set a goal for yourself. This is a good time to determine how competitive your application is and reflect on your interests and larger career goals by doing a self-check in (see Self-Check-In Questions Section below).

If it is your first job search, it is recommended that you apply to as many jobs as possible. Your goal might be: “submit x good applications per day” or “submit x good applications per week”, etc. Be realistic. If it is your first technical job, ‘getting your foot in the door’ is very important and accepting any role in your chosen field may be prudent. Later, once you have built up more experience in technical roles, you can apply for more competitive jobs.

As you progress through your career, your job search goals might change. Rather than focusing on quantity, you may want to take a more targeted approach. It might not be worthwhile for you to apply to jobs that don’t serve your interests if you are looking for a very specific role. This is the reason why it is important to know how competitive your application is for each job search. At this point, depending on how competitive your application is, it can help you set goals to get a job with a specific company or obtain a specific position.

Navigating Your First Engineering Job

Self-Check-In Questions

Below are some questions to guide your self-check-in. They will help you determine where you are at with your job search and what steps to take next.

- Is this your first job search? Do you have any previous work experience? How can you leverage these past experiences to get a job?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses while job searching? How can you leverage your strengths and work on your weaknesses to have a successful job search?
- What are the common areas of work in your industry? How knowledgeable are you in these areas? What are you doing to increase your knowledge in such areas?
- How competitive are you in your field? Do you have valuable skills others don't or do others have more skills than you?
- What are the documents (resume, cover letter) you need to update? What is your plan for updating these? What is the most important for you to highlight in these documents?

Start Early

It is typical to start your first job search ~4 months before the job start date. For example, if you are searching for the summer (May), January is usually a good time to start preparing. Similarly, if you are looking to start a job in September, begin looking in May, and if you are looking to start work in January, September is a good time to start searching. Starting early allows you to apply to more jobs, and gives you access to the opportunities that other students will miss out on.

Preparing a Resume

To prepare your resume for your first job search, start by listing your education, skills, and any relevant experiences. The Resume Toolkit linked at the bottom of this document will be a helpful guide. Create clear sections like contact information, education, skills, and work experience (if applicable). Tailor each section to emphasize accomplishments and abilities relevant to the job you're applying for. Use action words and concrete examples. Keep the format simple and consistent, and proofread carefully for errors. Finally, make sure to get feedback from the [Engineering Career Peer Coaches](#) by booking a one-on-one appointment.

Preparing a Cover Letter

It is a good idea to start putting together a "master" cover letter, which, as the name suggests, is a document that combines all your past work and volunteer experiences in one document. When you are applying for a job, you can easily modify this document and target the job description of the role you are applying to. It is ideal to have this done earlier rather than later because it allows you to apply for the jobs that are often missed by students who don't have this done earlier and allows you to have plenty of time to perfect each job application. The cover letter toolkit linked at the bottom of this document will be a helpful guide! This is also a good time to start looking at professional development opportunities such as workshops, panels, and networking events.



Navigating Your First Engineering Job

Where to Look for Opportunities

JOB PORTALS

There are many places students can look for opportunities. One of the two main common ways to find opportunities is through job portals such as [Indeed](#), and company websites. You can turn on the job alerts as well, so you get notified when a company posts a job. Another common way to look for positions is through [LinkedIn](#), which has a section dedicated to available jobs. Often, you can directly apply for jobs on LinkedIn. If you need help putting together a well-established LinkedIn Profile, refer to our LinkedIn Resource at the bottom of this document.

COMPANY WEBSITES

When searching for job opportunities, one valuable resource often overlooked is directly on a company's website. Company websites frequently feature a dedicated careers section where they advertise open positions, providing detailed job descriptions and application instructions. Navigating to a company's careers page offers insight into their culture, values, and the types of roles they're looking to fill. Applying through a company's website often allows for a more direct and streamlined application process, bypassing third-party job boards or recruitment agencies. You can find these opportunities by visiting the company website and navigating to the Careers section.

COMPANY WEBSITES

Another way to find a job is through networking. It is often assumed that networking is done with strangers, however, this is not always the case, and classmates, family members and mentors count as a part of your network too. Often, knowing someone at a company can give your application the upper hand. One effective method of networking is attending career fairs, which serve as hubs for connecting with potential employers and industry professionals.

These events provide opportunities to interact face-to-face, exchange contact information, and learn about available job openings. Engaging in meaningful conversations with recruiters and representatives can leave a lasting impression and potentially lead to future opportunities. Additionally, online platforms like LinkedIn offer a convenient avenue for networking. Here, individuals can connect with professionals across industries, expanding their reach beyond geographical constraints. Through LinkedIn, users can showcase their skills, experiences, and career aspirations, while also learning from others' journeys. Messaging connections or participating in group discussions allows for direct engagement and the exchange of valuable insights.

Whether networking in person at career fairs or virtually through platforms like LinkedIn, these approaches complement each other, offering diverse channels for building professional relationships and uncovering job opportunities. Networking with family and friends could be as simple as letting them know that you're actively seeking employment and sharing the type of roles you're interested in through casual conversations. Ask if they know of any job openings or if they can introduce you to people in their own networks who might be able to help.

See our [Networking Basics Toolkit](#)

JOB FAIRS AND EVENTS

Job fairs and career events are a good place to work on your networking skills and increase your connections with people in the industry. The EUS has an annual career fair that is open to all Engineering students at UBC. Many companies are often present, and the EUS announces which companies are coming before the career fair date. Another job event you can attend at UBC is your faculty's Industry Night, where, similar to the EUS career fair, companies are present to speak to students with the possibility of recruiting them. These events are often advertised through the EUS Newsletter (E-Neus) or through your department.

Before any job fair or job event, remember to brush up on your networking skills using our [Networking Basics](#) resource and be knowledgeable about the companies you are planning to speak to. Speak with confidence and dress appropriately!



Navigating Your First Engineering Job

Stand Out and Start Start Applying

Now that you have put together an updated resume and master cover letter and set a goal for yourself, it is time to start applying. Make a targeted cover letter for each job you apply for and take things away or add things to your cover letter to directly highlight your experiences that match with those that are mentioned in the job description. Research each company and the role you are applying for to directly target the employer.

Refer to our Resume and Cover letter Toolkits if you need help crafting your resume and cover letter.

Book an ECPC Application Review Appointment

It is a good idea to have one of the Engineering Peer Coaches (ECPCs) have a look at your resume and cover letter before you start applying for jobs. ECPCs will be able to provide feedback on your application and help you fine tune your resume and cover letter to target specific roles and companies. It is ideal to have your resume and cover letter reviewed by mid-January, so you can get the most benefit from well-written applications. Book your appointment on the [E-Hub website](#).



Don't lose faith!

Depending how often you are applying, the job market, and your level of experience, you may get an interview as early as the first month you start applying or the month when your job starts. Remember, don't lose faith in applying if you are a few months into applying and you haven't heard back from employers. There are many students who land their first jobs in May and even June. Delays in the recruiting cycle can occur due to various factors such as high volumes of applicants, extended decision-making processes, and unexpected internal changes. Consequently, candidates may experience prolonged waiting periods to hear back from employers as they navigate through these stages, leading to increased uncertainty and anticipation. Keep applying to jobs and maintain meeting your goal.

Prepare for Interviews

When you get an interview, it is ideal to take a few days to really prepare for it. Refer to our Interview Guideline Toolkit if you need help preparing for your first interview. This would also be a good time to do a mock interview with one of the ECPCs to nail down the interview process and get extra practice!

Resources

- [Resume Toolkit](#)
- [Cover Letter Toolkit](#)
- [Networking Basics](#)
- [Interview Guideline Toolkit](#)
- [LinkedIn for Engineers](#)

