

S I F Take Action Tips for Seniors



It is illegal for employers to discriminate against you because of your age.

Employers may assume that job applicants over 50 might not have the adaptability, the energy, or the tech-savvy of younger workers. They may doubt whether their skills are current and whether they're willing to learn new things. If you are over 50 and seeking employment, your goal is to alleviate any concerns about your ability. Do this by showcasing your recent experience and accomplishments, and by addressing employers' concerns head-on in the interview.

YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) protects those 40 years or older from employment discrimination based on age. Protections apply to both employees and job applicants.

Under the ADEA, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of his/her age with respect to any term, condition, or privilege of employment, including hiring, firing, promotion, layoff, compensation, benefits, job assignments, and training.

It is also unlawful to retaliate against an individual for opposing employment practices that discriminate based on age or for filing an age discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or litigation under the ADEA.

The ADEA applies to employers with 20 or more employees, including state and local governments. It also applies to employment agencies and labor organizations, as well as to the federal government.

ADEA protections include:

- **Apprenticeship Programs** – It is generally unlawful for apprenticeship programs to discriminate on the basis of age.
- **Job Notices and Advertisements** – It is unlawful to include age preferences, limitations, or specifications in job notices or advertisements, except in the rare circumstances where age is a “bona fide occupational qualification.”
- **Pre-employment Inquiries** – Employers are not specifically prohibited from asking an applicant’s age. However, requests for age information will be closely scrutinized to ensure the inquiry was made for a lawful purpose.
- **Benefits** – The Older Workers Benefit Protection Act of 1990 prohibits employers from denying benefits to older employees. In limited circumstances, employers may reduce benefits based on age, as long as the cost of providing the reduced benefits is the same as the cost of providing benefits to younger workers.

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For information on filing an age discrimination charge, contact:

Montana Human Rights Bureau
1625 11th Avenue
P.O. Box 1728
Helena, MT 59624-1728
Phone: 406-444-4356 or 1-800-542-0807
Website: erd.dli.mt.gov/human-rights

Or contact your local Job Service.



STAYING CURRENT

With rapid increases in technology, today's workplace requires workers who are willing to learn, adapt to change, and keep their skills current. To stay competitive, it is essential for older workers to update their skills.

Technology

Technology is everywhere, and most jobs require some level of computer skills. You'll need to know:

- Basic skills to operate a computer, such as handling a computer mouse, typing on a keyboard, and navigating file systems and menus.
- Microsoft Office programs, with particular attention to Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
- Essential internet skills, such as email, web browsing, and searching.

Where to Start

If you're a just beginning to learn computer technology:

- Your local Job Service is a great place to start. They can assist you there, or help you find free or low-cost computer training.
- Check your local library for a free beginner's computer class.
- Senior centers, learning centers, adult or continuing education programs, community colleges and online tutorials can all help you upgrade your skills, often for free or at low cost.

- Find a reverse mentor—a tech-savvy person who can guide you in updating your skills. Your family or friends can be a great resource.

Evaluate your transferable skills

Over your life you've acquired many useful skills, whether it was in a previous career or through other life experiences. You'd be surprised to see how skills can transfer across occupations.

MCIS can help you identify your skills, and even match them to occupations. Just login to MCIS, go to the "Assessments" tab, and choose "SKILLS."

Update your skills

If you know the basics but want to update your skill set, identify and learn the most current, in-demand skills for your occupation.

- Visit your local Job Service Montana office. They can help you identify the skills you'll need for your new career.

- Take classes at the local community college. Students of all ages are continuing their education and upgrading their skills. Chances are you won't be the only non-traditional student in the class.
- Find online tutorials. YouTube is a great free resource for instructional videos on just about any topic.
- Enroll in online courses to get you up to speed quickly. Consider subscribing to an "all-you-can-learn" service like Lynda.com for in-depth tutorials.

Once you take training, be sure to practice.

Like a muscle, skills you acquire will atrophy and deteriorate if they aren't used. Create personal projects to practice and develop your new skills. Regular practice will help build your confidence and help you create a body of work you can showcase to potential employers.

THE JOB SEARCH

Networking is your best bet.

Over the years, you've made dozens of professional and personal contacts. Use them. Contact everyone you know and ask if they know anyone who's hiring. This advice is good for everyone, but can be especially effective for older workers who have a lifetime of human resources to draw on.

Online Networking

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is the largest professional networking site on the web. By starting a profile, you are presenting your professional qualifications to a community of millions. Recruiters actively scour profiles for potential hires with the skills and experience they need. Even employers using more

traditional recruitment methods look up applicants on LinkedIn. If they can't find your profile, they may assume you're behind the times.

Other Networking Opportunities

Professional associations, volunteering, and consulting are also excellent ways to network.

RESUME TIPS

You might be inclined to emphasize the wealth of experience you've worked a lifetime to acquire. You're proud of it, and rightfully so. But a better strategy is to highlight your recent accomplishments to show you are a forward-thinking individual, eager to embrace the latest innovations in your field. Here's how:

- List only a few of your most current positions, or those most relevant to the job you're applying for. Many of the skills you acquired in early jobs will be outdated. Experts recommend going back no further than 10 years in your work history.
- Use current industry terminology. It shows that you are keeping current and hiring managers will be drawn to resumes using familiar words.
- List professional development, trainings, workshops, and new certifications that demonstrate you have kept your skills and knowledge up-to-date.
- List technical and computer skills and make sure they are current. Don't list software, systems, or computer language that is outdated.
- Keep an electronic resume that is not formatted (e.g. no bold, italics, centering, etc.) This ensures that resume-screening software can read it. This type of resume is usually sent in an email or cut and pasted online. (The Resume Creator feature in MCIS can save your resume in three different ways, including the unformatted .txt file type for posting online.)
- If you are submitting your resume online, use key words that are likely to be searched for by resume-scanning software. You can find the key words in the job announcement. They are usually industry jargon or job requirements commonly associated with that occupation. (MCIS lists skills and abilities associated with specific occupations. These skills can be used as keywords in resumes.)

THE JOB INTERVIEW

The interview is your opportunity to dispel any stereotypes or concerns about hiring an older worker. You need to demonstrate that you are positive, energetic, dedicated, and can work well with colleagues of all ages. Here are some tips to help you ace the interview:

- Emphasize the assets of an older worker, and your ability to learn. Use words like "adaptable," "flexible," and "dependable." Focus on your experience, stability, frugality, and strong work ethic.
- Show that you are technically savvy by incorporating your computer skills into your answers and show that you are energetic by talking about physical activities you pursue.
- Talk about the new skills you have attained and how you stay current in your industry/job.

THE JOB INTERVIEW (CONTINUED)

- Put together a portfolio of your best work and show it off. An impressive resume is well and good, but nothing conveys the quality of your work better than your work itself.
- There are a lot of older workers in the workforce now, so you are not alone. Be comfortable and confident in the interview. Look your best and dress in modern clothes with a modern haircut.
- Address any time gaps in your resume. You might say that you tried retirement and it is not for you. You might say that you took some time to learn something new, make a change, or to take care of a family member.
- There is a good chance that the interviewers will be younger than you. Do not talk down to them or say you won't need any training for the job. You have an opportunity to show that you can be respectful and work well with younger people, including a supervisor who is younger than you.
- There may be a concern that they can't afford your salary. If they bring it up during the interview, say you expect to be paid the average wages for a similar worker in your area. Avoid giving an actual figure until they offer you the job or give you their figure.
- Ask for an opportunity to demonstrate your skills by helping out on a small project. Even if they turn down your offer, you've shown initiative.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a program of the U.S. Department of Labor that grants eligible older Americans the opportunity to provide community service while developing and enhancing job skills needed for the 21st-century workforce.

Participants take part in on-the-job training or classroom instruction, learning valuable transferable skills needed to compete for and secure employment.

If you are aged 55 or older, unemployed, and your income is no more than 125% of the federal poverty rate, have poor employment prospects, and are legal to work in the United States, you are eligible to participate in this program.

While you are participating in this training, you are learning not only specific job skills, but you will be learning how to re-enter the job market, how to market yourself, and how to interview and land that job. The SCSEP program is time-limited, with the ultimate goal of placing you in an unsubsidized job.

You can find out what organization provides the SCSEP program in your area at goo.gl/r3nKP6.

HOW WORK AFFECTS YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

You can get Social Security retirement or survivors benefits and work at the same time. But, if you're younger than full retirement age, and earn more than certain amounts, your benefits will be reduced. The

amount that your benefits are reduced, however, isn't truly lost. Your benefit will be increased at your full retirement age to account for benefits withheld due to earlier earnings.

For detailed information, please visit: www.socialsecurity.gov.