How To Navigate USAJOBS.gov
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• About me
• UChicagoGRAD
• How do I really use this crazy website people keep referring to, USAJOBS.gov?

This is Ben, a buddy of mine, who works in the federal government...he navigated USAJOBS.gov successfully...if he did it, so can you!
About Me!

Tyler Blackwell, AM

Special Consultant to the Harris School

UChicagoGRAD, Career Development

- Master’s in Middle Eastern Studies from UChicago’s CMES
- CLS in 2010 in Amman, Jordan
- Presidential Management Fellow at U.S. Department of State (worked on CLS and Fulbright) – had to navigate USAjobs.gov successfully for this!
- Foreign Affairs Officer in Office of the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace
- Founded nonprofit in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood, Center for Arabic Language & Culture (CALC)
- At UChicago since September 2015
Career Development & Fellowship Support @ UChicagoGRAD

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What is USAJOBS.gov?

- The official job portal website of the United States government
- Run by the Office of Personnel Management, an independent agency that manages civil service
- The website is 20 years old and has gone through many iterations and changes...the most recent changes taking place this year.
- Here’s a brief history of the federal hiring process since 1996...
Prior to 1996

Federal hiring was a paper process.

Potential applicants would have to travel to federal buildings to view job announcements on bulletin boards or posted in “reading rooms”.

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USAJOBS over the years...

1996

Where it all began

The USAJOBS website was launched.

As the single entry point for federal employment, the initial site laid the groundwork for the evolution that would take place over the next 20 years.

The original site was basic, featuring only current job openings, general information, and the ability to fill out an online application.
USAJOBS over the years...

1996-2001
The Early Years

USAJOBS evolves with the web.
The website continued to enhance search, allowing users to identify jobs within a specific agency. Also, for the first time, USAJOBS provided users with a tool to create a resume that included their education, work experience, and other important details.
2002-2010

Rebranding

USAJOBS began to expand even further and add more features.

Job search and resume builder were improved, and the Information Center and Veteran Resource Center were added to provide additional help to the user.

By 2008, the website began to take a more personalized approach by introducing “My USAJOBS” and was rebranded as a one-stop shop for job seekers.
USAJOBS over the years...

2010-2011
The Facelift

As part of the federal hiring reform initiative, USAJOBS underwent a major facelift.

The redesigned site included a new basic landing page, an enhanced job search tool, and targeted resources for students, executives, and individuals with disabilities.
USAJOBS over the years...

2011-2013
New and Improved

USAJOBS continued to develop innovative changes.

USAJOBS established a data vision and developed tools to support agencies in recruitment, sourcing candidates, and measuring effectiveness. This made USAJOBS more than a job board: it would now become a highly effective and strategic recruiting tool.
USAJOBS over the years...

2014

Refocusing on user needs

The USAJOBS team established six design pillars that serve as the foundation for all new designs:

1. Clearly guide applicants to the information they need to make confident job search and application decisions.
2. Set clear application expectations and present a unified and simplified application process.
3. Provide opportunities for applicants to showcase their unique qualities.
4. Convey information in a language that every applicant can understand.
5. Serve as the most trusted resource for federal hiring information.
6. Provide a thoughtfully crafted experience that helps users accomplish their intended goals.
The USAJOBS program continued to grow into a robust team.

The integration of the design and development teams allowed for more rapid iterations and research to better understand the needs of users. The team sought to not only improve user experience, but to also influence the end-to-end federal hiring process.
USAJOBS today...

2016

Where we are today

- 11 million accounts
- 16 million resumes
- 1 billion searches per year
- 22 million applications started per year
- 14,000+ jobs available every day

In 2016, USAJOBS has delivered a mobile-friendly responsive site replacing the app, a revised application process and a new user interface, Help Center, account experience, and landing page.
The goal of USAJOBS?

“Our goal for USAJOBS is to provide relevant tools and resources to support job seekers in their quest for employment.

In order to realize this vision, our team is leveraging data to its fullest potential to inform iterative design efforts that will result in connecting talented individuals to the right jobs.”

— Michelle Earley
USAJOBS Program Manager
Let's explore the website...
Unique Hiring Paths...

Explore Unique Hiring Paths

Hiring authorities are a way for the Federal Government to hire individuals who may fall under one of the following groups of people, including:

- I'm a **current/former Federal employee**
  - You may be eligible for a merit promotion.

- **I'm a Student/recent graduate**
  - The Pathways Program offers federal internship and employment opportunities.

- I'm a **Veteran**
  - You may be eligible for veterans' preference, as well as other veteran-specific hiring options.

- I'm a **Senior executive**
  - You may be eligible for a SES position if you meet the five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs).

- I'm an **Individual with a Disability**
  - You may be eligible to apply for jobs and get hired without going through the full application process.

- I'm a **Military spouse**
  - You may be eligible to apply for jobs open to merit promotion candidates.

- I'm a **Peace Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA alumnus**
  - You may qualify for non-competitive eligibility.
Let’s explore the website...

Do you want to explore what federal agencies are out there? You can do so at: usa.gov/federal-agencies/a
Creating your account...

USAJOBS

Create account

All fields are required

Primary Email address

Only one account can be created for each email address. Do not share your account with anyone else.

Confirm Primary Email address

Username

Your Username must:
- Be 8 to 20 characters long
- Have at least one letter
- Only contain the following special characters: underscore (_), ampersand (&), and period (.)

Terms and Conditions

This U.S. Federal Government system is to be used by authorized users only. Information from this system resides on computer systems funded by the government. The data and documents on this system include Federal records that may contain sensitive information protected by various Federal statutes, including the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a.

All access or use of this system constitutes user understanding and acceptance of these terms and constitutes unconditional consent to review, monitoring and action by all authorized government and law enforcement personnel. While using this system your use may be monitored, recorded and subject to audit.

Unauthorized user attempts or acts to (1) access, upload, change, or delete or deface information on this system, (2) modify this system, (3) deny access to this system, (4) accrue resources for unauthorized use or (5) otherwise misuse this system are strictly prohibited. Such attempts or acts are subject to action that may result in criminal, civil, or administrative penalties.

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Setting up profile...
Setting up profile...
Setting up profile...
The daunting federal resume...
Let the website build it for you...

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

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Traditional vs Federal Resume...

Abraham Lincoln

111 President Drive
Washington, DC 20005
202-200-2322
dlincon@powerful.com

OBJECTIVE

* Obtain a position at XYZ Company where I can maximize my management skills, quality assurance, program development, and foreign language experience and expertise.

EXPERIENCE

Public Affairs Assistant, Department of State, Washington, DC
Sept 20XX – August 20XX
* Served as point of contact for all external communications with public affairs team within Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
* Supervised ten contractors on communications project
* Pitched media for program publicity resulting in four newspaper articles and two interviews
* Facilitating biweekly team meetings and monthly diversity training presentations for twenty to thirty internal staff members

Junior, Department of State, Washington, DC
Sept 20XX – August 20XX
* Wrote fifteen articles about foreign education initiatives in Bureau newsletter & press releases
* Drafted twenty memoranda for the Undersecretary of State
* Assembled financial and budget information for use in Educational and Cultural Affairs material

Political and Economic Section Intern, U.S. Consulate, Madrid, Spain
June – August 20XX
* Research and wrote regional economic and political briefs for US Ambassador’s Madrid consul district visits
* Compiled ten briefs with fifteen professionals in regional chambers of commerce, banks’ nongovernmental organizations, and government offices
* Synthesized information from external research and interviews

Program Coordinator, ABC After-school Program, Philadelphia, PA
Sept 20XX – April 20XX
* Developed and monitored program goals and policies resulting in the highest recorded performance in ten years
* Recruited, trained, and managed twenty-five adult mentors and twenty youth in three mentoring programs in limited resource communities
* Developed marketing and training materials for use in programs and mentoring initiatives
* Wrote and managed two program grants, hired three outside contractors for grant implementation
* Communicated daily in Spanish with program participants and their families

EDUCATION

Marble House College, Philadelphia, PA
Bachelors of Arts in Economics, Spanish Language (double major); GPA: 3.5
Relevant coursework: Macro Economics, Micro Economics, Public Policy Process

LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Diversity Workshop Facilitator, Tri-College Winter Institute
Sept 20XX – May 20XX
* Developed twelve forums for dialogue between diverse student groups
* Built five partnerships between student groups through cultural programming

President, Marble House Business Society
May 20XX – May 20XX
* Recruited five executive committee members, planned meetings
* Managed a membership base of 40+ students
* Organized club involvement in business related workshops/events

Assistant Department Representative, Marble House College
Sept 20XX – May 20XX
* Represented 100+ students at language department meetings

SKILLS

Language Skills and Regional Expertise
* Fluent in Spanish, advanced Spanish reading and writing
* Regional expertise in Balkan, Post-Soviet, and Western European political issues (including extensive regional travel)

Computer Skills
* Proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook)
Traditional vs Federal Resume...
Candidate information

Provide basic information, including your name, contact information, and citizenship. Most positions require applicants to be a U.S. citizen in order to apply, but there may be exceptions for hard-to-fill jobs. You also need to identify whether you have ever worked for the federal government and whether you qualify for veteran’s preference. If you have never served on active duty in the Armed Forces, then you are not eligible for veteran’s preference.

Required: Name, contact information, citizenship, whether you claim veteran’s preference, federal employee information
Work experience

List the required elements for any relevant jobs you’ve held. Each component is essential to your resume meeting the minimum qualifications. Experienced workers may choose to list only jobs held in the last 10 years.

Required: Employer, location, position title, start and end date, average hours worked per week, responsibilities and accomplishments.

Optional: You may want to include your supervisor(s) as a reference. Including your salary is also optional and will not exclude your resume from consideration.
Building federal resume...

Education

Include basic information about all schools attended and coursework completed. Only list degrees from accredited schools or programs that meet the Office of Personnel Management’s standards. If you wish to substitute education for experience to qualify for a job, you must include the information about coursework in your resume. To ensure that you receive appropriate credit for your academic credentials, you should provide as much information as possible.

Required: Schools attended, degrees obtained

Optional: Grade point averages, relevant coursework taken, academic papers or projects, key presentations, honors received, other important accomplishments
Building federal resume...

OPTIONAL INFORMATION TO INCLUDE

It is to your advantage to provide as much relevant information as possible in any of these optional sections. A federal resume can range from two to five (or more) pages so you can expand your accomplishments and demonstrate why you are qualified for the position.

A well-written resume allows you to highlight your accomplishments and display your competitive skills, which demonstrates to the employer your value and ultimately determines your pay level.

Job related training

Include any classes, seminars, coursework, certifications, or trainings you have completed that relates to your professional development and the position description.

Affiliations

List any professional associations, societies, clubs or other organizations you are affiliated with. Highlight any leadership role and volunteer experience you may have had, to the extent that it relates to the job description.

References

In addition to your supervisors, you may choose to provide professional or personal references who can vouch for your character, work ethic and dependability. Individuals you have worked with closely—such as colleagues, classmates and mentors—will add to your credibility as an applicant.

Professional publications

Include any publications you have contributed to, along with the publication name and date.

Language skills

Include any language experience you may have and level of proficiency.

Additional information

You can include any other relevant pieces of your resume in this section: skills, awards, leadership activities, public speaking engagements, volunteer experience or other items that may not fit in a section above. You may choose to list your availability, the type of work environment you seek and your desired location. These items will not exclude your resume from consideration, but are simply used for recruiters to determine your interest.
Some tips...

- **Tailor your resume to the job announcement**
  - Focus on duties, qualifications, and requirements sections and include keywords and phrases
  - Mirror language!
  - Emphasize areas where your previous experience or education overlaps with duties and qualifications listed in job announcement

- **Numbers impress hiring managers**
  - Highlight performance metrics, using percentages, numbers, and data to describe specific impact
  - Be accurate and understand you’d need to back these numbers up in an interview

- **Sell yourself and your achievements**
  - Think about all activities that might qualify you for the job: social/religious organizations, volunteer experience, unique projects/interests, awards or certificates

- **Check your spelling and grammar**

- **Keep a copy of your private-sector resume**

- **Be concise**
Finding jobs...

- This may seem like the hardest part, but it should not be...

- At the home screen, you’ll find a “search” option in the top right corner or a “search jobs” option

- I’d suggest you find the “advanced search” option and begin there

- Here, you’ll have the option to search keywords, job title, agency name...

- You can then highlight salary/pay grade, job category, location, department and agency, type of work schedule, posting options, and other search options (like supervisory level, travel required, relocation authorized, and security clearance required)
Finding jobs...

- I searched for jobs in several locations, in the Department of State, permanent and full-time jobs, no relocation authorized, grades GS 09-11 and here’s what it pulled up for today (10/31)…
Finding jobs...

- If I remove the agency/departmental specific search, instead of 5 job postings, I get 138...
So many options...

- Within my search, I found job titles ranging from:
  - **Economist** (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)
  - **Strategic Policy Specialist** (Treasury, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network)
  - **Policy Advisor** (Treasury, Office of Consumer Policy within Domestic Finance)
  - **Intelligence Research Specialist** (Watch Officer, Treasury Intelligence Operation Centers)
  - **Budget Analyst** (Customs and Border Protection, Recent Graduates – Department of Homeland Security)
  - **Statistician** (Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention)

- I did a search for “Recent Graduate” and got 323 jobs:
  - **Operations Research Analyst** (Department of the Army)
  - **Natural Resources Specialist** (Ranger, Department of the Army)
  - **Pathways Program**...
This program offers federal internship and employment opportunities for current students, recent graduates, and those with an advanced degree. Three different “paths” available:
1. Internship Program
2. Recent Graduates Program
3. Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program

In 2010, President Obama signed a management agenda to prepare agencies to “Connect with Top Talent” from communities across America. This campaign has stressed the need for collaboration between hiring managers and human resources professionals and focuses their efforts on using the full-range of recruitment and hiring tools to attract top talent and hire highly-qualified individuals.

Part of this campaign called for improving USAJOBS.gov and using it as a tool to attract and recruit diverse, qualified applicants

- Within this recruitment effort, hiring managers are using “resume mining” from within USAJOBS.gov to find candidates to recruit (your resume must be searchable)

To find out more on this, go to [www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-excellence](http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-excellence)
Some tips...

Application questionnaires, essays and other materials

Your federal resume is an important part of the application process, but it’s not the only step toward getting a federal job. Many agencies will require you to answer application questionnaires, which use multiple-choice and short essay responses. Other assessment tools might also be used, such as the Foreign Service Exam at the State Department. The good news is that each federal agency is required to provide information about how it will rate or assess its applicants, so you will know up front what will be expected of you and how you will be judged.

You may also be asked for additional pieces of information, such as your college transcripts. If you miss any piece that is asked of you, your application will likely be disqualified—so read carefully and follow through!
More on this...

Answering application questionnaires:
• Formats vary considerably
• Take the time to consider your skills
• Answers should mirror resume
  • If you claim to be an “expert” on every question, but your resume doesn’t back this up, the agency may think you’re being dishonest...NOT A GOOD THING 😞

Application essays usually are not required at initial application stage, but can often be required in later stages of process
• Mirror the qualifications or knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in your essays
• Again, use key words and phrases
• Avoid acronyms
• When recounting an experience, tell a story by explaining the challenge(s) you face, the action(s) you took, and the result(s) from your actions
Submitting your job application...

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION ON TIME

The federal application process may have more steps than you are accustomed to, so allow plenty of time to thoroughly complete your application. Agencies will not make exceptions if you miss the deadline.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

After reading the application requirements in the “How to Apply” section of the job announcement, be sure to complete each step and include all items asked for. When you are ready to submit your application on USAJOBS.gov, you may be redirected to an external hiring system. You will need to create a login on this website to actually submit your application. Be sure to submit all application materials through the agency’s system of choice.

TAKE NOTE OF KEY APPLICATION DETAILS

For future reference, save both the job announcement number and the HR contact information listed in on the job posting in case you need to follow up with the agency.

SAVE A COPY OF YOUR APPLICATION

It will be helpful to review your application if you are asked to interview, especially if you have recently applied to a number of jobs.

BE CONSISTENT

Each piece of the application package should reinforce your qualifications for the position. Be consistent in what skills and abilities you highlight in the resume, questionnaire and other application materials.
What Happens After You Apply...

It goes into a black hole, right?
What Happens After You Apply…

• Typically, at least thousands of others will apply for the same job you’ve just applied for…thus, it takes time for all the computers and human resources folks to sift through the applications…BUT…

• Once the application period closes, the HR office evaluates each application and if you meet the basic qualifications, your name will be pushed on to a selecting official. He/she will choose applicants to interview from this list of “highly-qualified candidates”

• The hiring agency should make decisions within 6-8 weeks, as they have federal mandates (from President Obama) to fill their open positions in 80 days or less

• Good news is that you can track your application!

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How to track it...

• Four points of contact from agency:
  1. When your application is received
  2. If you meet the basic qualifications
  3. When your application is referred to a selecting official
  4. If you are offered the position

• You should take a proactive approach to find out the status of your application

• You can contact the agency point of contact often listed on the job application, as long as you are courteous, polite, and not burdensome. Be respectful of the employee’s time. I would recommend not doing so until at least 2-3 weeks have passed since the position you applied for closed. This may, at the very least, be to check on whether or not the agency actually received your application or not or to verify whether all the application materials were submitted in completion. Always reference the announcement number.

• You can track the status of your application by logging in to your USAJOBS.gov account
What Happens Next?

- If you are contacted for an interview, you should be very happy about this and take a moment to celebrate, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

- Interviews are the last stage in the assessment process, for the most part.

- Some agencies inform you of the interview selection through an email, while others will actually call you to congratulate you and set up the interview. Should you receive a call about an interview, make sure you get the following information:
  - Name of the caller
  - Agency that the caller represents
  - Return phone number
  - Confirmation of the job title (you’ve likely applied for many)
  - Time and date of the interview
  - Location
  - Any other items you need to bring
  - Additional assessments you may need to go through at interview.

- You should also try to gather the following information ahead of the interview:
  - Name of the interviewer(s)
  - Interview format
  - Security/access requirements and time required to get on site
  - Parking or transportation instructions
  - How long the interview session is expected to last.
Beyond application...

We are prepared and ready to help you through the following stages after you successfully navigate USAJOBS.gov:

1. The interview process

2. Reviewing and negotiating your job offer
   A. Grade and step level - unlikely able to negotiate grade level
   B. Health benefit options
   C. Retirement plan (FERS)
   D. Student loan repayment
   E. Professional development
   F. Tuition benefit
   G. Recruitment bonuses
   H. Relocation expenses
   I. Start Date (“Entrance on duty” or EOD)
   J. Flexible schedules and telework policies

3. Background checks and security clearances
Should I even bother?
Can I successfully navigate USABJOBS.gov?
Benefits of a career in the federal government...

You can find yourself in places you’d never imagined...

Meeting great people from all over the world...

Working on issues that matter...

- The federal government is undertaking innumerable ambitious, bold, and transformational projects...from major milestones in shared services to a new way of approaching digital and customer experience, there are ambitious initiatives happening all over the government (cyber security, IT modernization)
- Make a difference; great benefits and competitive pay; jobs in every field; work/life balance; opportunities to advance and move within government; professional development; job security
Some more resources...

Here are a few resources you should check out:

- **bestplacetowork.org** – excellent place to check out how federal employees have responded to surveys and what the rankings of agencies are by size, category, demographic, occupation
  - Can you guess what the number one ranked agencies are by size?
    - Large: NASA
    - Mid-sized: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
    - Small: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

- **opm.gov**
  - Federal salary tables
  - Handbook of occupational groups and families

- **gogovernment.org**

- **govloop.com**

- **federaljobs.net**

- **bradtraverse.com**
  - Capitol Hill, government relations jobs blog
Questions?

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