

# Hey, Get a Job!

*A Teen Guide for Getting and Keeping a Job*



**jennie withers**  
author • teacher

## *More praise for **Hey, Get a Job!***

*"As an employability instructor to at-risk youth I find that Jennie Withers' book gives a terrific outline for our classes. Its interesting stories and youth-friendly language allow discussions and motivates questions. It is a necessity for our life skill classes."*

*Jaime Hansen ~ Student Advisor, Life's Kitchen*

*"This book is well written. The language, writing style and layout of the book will appeal to younger readers, but the information is relevant to job seekers of any age."*

*Jamie Simmons ~ Middle School Business Teacher, Christiansburg Middle School*

*"I would recommend this book to any educator interested in helping junior high or high school aged youth get and keep a first job. The book is laid out in a straightforward manner allowing a typical juvenile to easily create a résumé, cover letter, as well as be ready to fill out applications.*

*The book is an easy read that should grace your reference shelf."*

*Michael McKay ~ Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections*

# *Hey, Get a Job!*

Author  
Jennie Withers

Editor  
Denise Dunlap-Taylor

Graphic Artist  
Lisa Hlavinka

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# *Hey, Get a Job!*

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# *The Rules of Life*

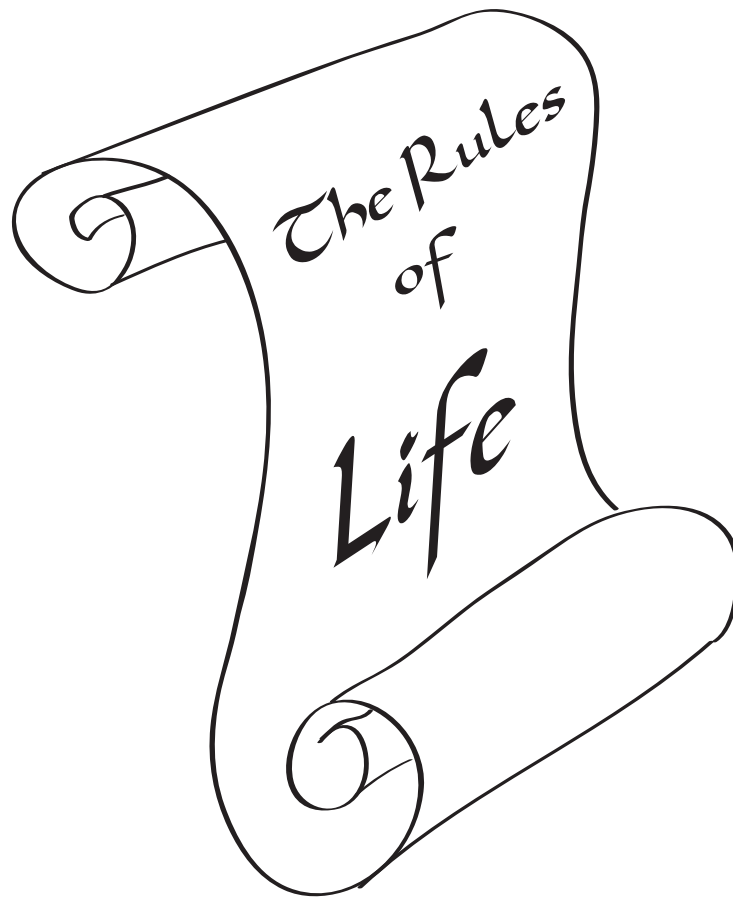
By Charles J. Sykes  
(A Perfect Place to Begin)



- Rule 1: Life is not fair, get used to it.
- Rule 2: The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.
- Rule 3: You will not make \$40,000 a year right out of high school. You will not be vice-president with a hot car until you earn both.
- Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait until you get a boss.
- Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping; they called it opportunity.
- Rule 6: If you screw up, it is not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes. Learn from them.
- Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents were not as boring as they are now. They got that way paying your bills, cleaning your room, and listening to you tell them how idealistic you are. So before you save the rainforest from the bloodsucking parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.
- Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades, they will give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This, of course, bears not the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.
- Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You do not get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.
- Rule 10: Television is not real life. In real life, people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

- Rule 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.
- Rule 12: Smoking does not make you look cool. It makes you look moronic. Next time you're out cruising, watch an 11 year old with a butt in his mouth. That's what you look like to anyone over 20. Ditto for "expressing yourself" with purple hair and/or pierced body parts.
- Rule 13: You are not immortal. (See rule No. 12.) If you are under the impression that living fast, dying young and leaving a beautiful corpse is romantic, you obviously haven't seen one of your peers at room temperature lately.
- Rule 14: Enjoy this while you can. Sure parents are a pain, school's a bother, and life is depressing. But someday you'll realize how wonderful it was to be a kid. Maybe you should start now.

You're welcome.



# Introduction

Hello! So you've decided to see what it takes to get a job. I don't know how you got the book. Maybe you're an ambitious self starter who relishes the idea of being financially independent. Maybe someone gave you the book. If it was given to you, that's a pretty big hint don't you think? Either way, it's opened, so kudos to you.

*Work saves us from three great evils: boredom, vice and need.*

*~Voltaire, Candide, 1759*

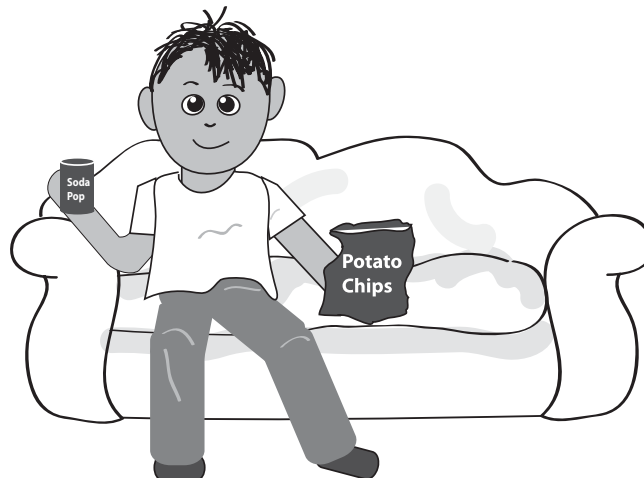
*I've tried to make this book as short and to the point as possible. I included cartoons, quotes and examples from teens. Everything I could think of to prepare you to enter the world of work.*

*I guess I should share my qualifications for writing this book. First of all, I've had a lot of jobs. My most recent occupation (besides a writer of this book) is a teacher.*

*During the last five years of my fourteen year teaching career, I have taught a Technical Writing class for ninth graders. The class includes a unit on how to get and keep jobs. During my unit planning, I found tons of information for adults looking for careers, but very little for teenagers new to the work force. Because of this, I gathered bits and pieces of information from a lot of paper and internet sources, as well as talking to employers who hire teens.*

*After I gathered all the material and put it together, I got the idea for **Hey, Get a Job!** I thought it would be nice to have age appropriate information on getting a job in one book and not scattered at job services, internet sites and in employers' heads. I also have to give credit where credit is due. Much of the book came from my students. I address five years worth of their questions, mistakes and positive experiences when getting and keeping a job. Thank you to my West students in Boise, Idaho.*

*O.k., without further ado, here is what you can expect to see in your book.*



Time to get off the couch!

# Contents

## Section 1: Who Will Hire Me?

Answers all those questions about what is legal for teens to do, finding openings and picking up applications.

## Section 2: All Those Blanks

The application you turn in is the employer's first impression of you. Don't make it their last. There's a lot of do's and don'ts I'll go over so your application doesn't end up in the trash.

## Section 3: Don't Panic, It's Just a Résumé

There's a slim chance an employer may ask you for a résumé. Even if they don't, résumé writing is a skill you will need in the near future. I'll show you how to write one even with little or no work experience.

## Section 4: I'm Speechless

Part four will help you with the most nerve wracking part of getting a job, the interview. An interview doesn't have to be the stuff nightmares are made of. It's all about preparation.

## Section 5: So Now I Work, Right? Wrong!

So you get the job, then what? There are all these forms and things employers want you to learn before you start the job, one of those is the ability to read your paycheck.

## Section 6: What Do You Want From Me?

Part six addresses what employers want from their employees. In other words, how can you avoid being fired?

## Section 7: In the Long Run

There are things you should watch for to know whether you're being taken advantage of by an employer. This section also discusses how to avoid the pitfalls of having a job and making money.



Throughout the book you will see stop signs followed by instructions to write. Use the Notes pages at the end of each section for these important assignments.

## Frequently Asked Questions

I collected questions from my students as we talked about this information. I included the questions they asked, with the answers of course, at the end of each section.

So there it is. I would wish you luck finding a job, but it's not about being lucky, it's about being prepared. Congratulations on your intelligent decision to become a responsible, contributing citizen.

*The will to win is important, but the will to  
prepare is vital.*

*~Joe Paterno*

## Section 1: *Who Will Hire Me?*

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***Hey, Get a Job!***

***Tasha turned sixteen and decided it was time to find a job. She immediately thought of the convenience store around the corner from her house. She knew the manager and thought it would be easy to get a job there because of this connection. Tasha asked her manager friend for an application. He told her he wouldn't hire her because the convenience store sold alcoholic beverages, and by law, Tasha was not old enough to sell them.***

I'm sure I don't have to tell you, but teens aren't considered adults in the eyes of the law. So what does that mean when it comes to getting a job? It means you are restricted in what you can legally do for work, the age at which you can begin working, and how many hours you can work during school time and summer time. To find the rules for your state go to:

<http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm>

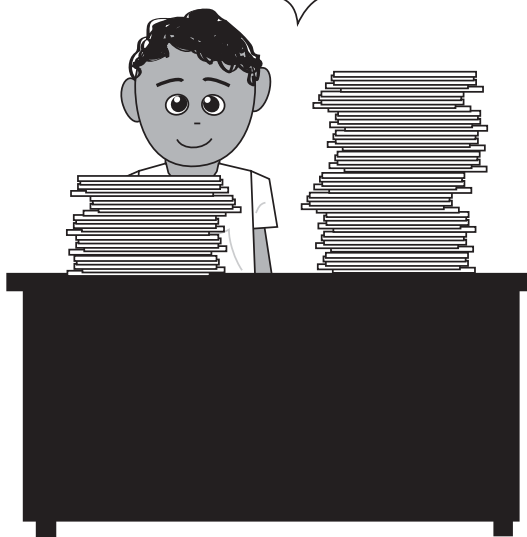
(click on the state in which you live)

Besides the laws given by the Department of Labor, individual businesses may set ages at which they will hire. It would be a good idea to ask if they hire teenagers, and at what age, before you fill out an application. If you are involved in an extracurricular activity like a sport, ask the employer if they will work around your schedule. There is no sense in filling out applications for jobs you have no chance of getting.

***Do you know the difference between education and experience? Education is when you read the fine print; experience is what you get when you don't.***

***~Pete Seeger***

Only 50 more years until retirement!!



Knowing what you can legally do helps narrow job choices, but you also need to think about what you want to do. Know yourself. Are you a people person? Are you good with kids? Do you like working with food? Do you want to be inside or outside? Are you restricted in times of day or year you can work? Think about your priorities. Don't lose sight of your long range goals like a state championship, high school diploma, or going to college.

## Section 1: Who Will Hire Me?

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It is true you can't be overly picky when it comes to your first job, but you also don't have to do something you will absolutely hate. It is a common misconception among teens that the only jobs available to them are in fast food restaurants or grocery stores. Those types of positions are often most visible, and they are great jobs, but they are not the only options. Don't apply for jobs you know will make you miserable. Why do that to yourself?

*Knowing others is intelligence;  
knowing yourself is wisdom.*

*~Lao Tzu*

### Where To Look

#### Use the Job Service.

One resource not used enough by teens is the Job Service. As its title implies, its purpose is to help people find jobs. That includes teenagers. And, it's free. The Job Service can put you in contact with employers you may not think of. For students in extracurricular activities at school, those who want to focus on school work during the school year, and anyone who wants to work summers only, Job Services do summer job fairs for teens in the spring. They are also willing and able to assist you in locating a job year round. You can look up your state's Job Service on the computer or in a phone book. Keep in mind unemployed adults will take precedence over an unemployed teen.

*Tom wanted a job, but didn't want to work in fast food or at a grocery store. Tom was an outdoors kind of guy. He also played school sports which would severely limit when he could work during the school year. Tom went to a job fair sponsored by his local Job Service in the spring. Tom found the perfect job working in the summer doing landscape maintenance for a school district.*

#### Use your connections.

Connections or word-of-mouth is also a good way to find a job. If someone knows you and your strengths, they are a good source for putting you in contact with employers. In a competitive job market where it's hard to get 'face time' with employers, a referral from someone you know can make all the difference. Be careful pursuing a job because a friend works there, however. I will discuss why a little later in the section.

#### Find it on the internet.

When I ask my classes where to look for job openings, many say the newspaper 'want ads'. Although this is a good source for adults, it tends not to be for teens. Businesses believe the newspaper is read primarily by adults; the want ads reflect that belief. The same goes for national job search web sites like Monster.com. If you can find a local area web site, you may have more luck there. There are web sites with job listings for teens out there. Do a search for 'teen jobs'. They cover mostly major cities, but they are worth checking into. The Job Service will post openings on the internet, but you need to register with them before you have access to those listings.

#### Research company websites.

Most businesses will list current job openings and instructions on how to apply either online or in person. Some will allow you to sign up for e-mail alerts for openings. Whether applying, submitting a résumé or requesting to be added to a mailing list, be sure to read all the instructions carefully so you don't make the wrong first impression.

### Take a walk.

There is no law against simply applying at a business. If you think you would like to work at a certain place, ask them for an application. There doesn't have to be a 'help wanted' sign in the window for you to apply. Ask them to keep your application on file in case of future openings. Call periodically to make sure your application is still on file, and if an opening comes up, call and make sure they're looking at your application.

### Be your own boss.

Have you ever considered starting your own business? One thing teens have going for them is they are cheap labor. Mowing lawns, babysitting, dog walking, cleaning, etc. are excellent ideas for teens. Make a pamphlet advertising your business and describing your qualifications. Distribute it around your neighborhood. See Section 3, *Don't Panic it's Just a Résumé* for ideas on what needs to go on your advertisement. You may be the perfect solution for your neighbors who are looking to save money on services. If you do decide to start something on your own, you are not going to escape the job process – you still have to sell yourself. Put an address, phone number, email and website address (if you have one) on your advertisement so that prospective clients may contact you. Because they are going to interview you before they hire you, make sure you are prepared. See Section 4, *I'm Speechless* for interviewing tips and be ready to discuss your qualifications and why they should hire you.

### Consider volunteering.

In a down economy where jobs are scarce, and if you don't need the money, you may want to volunteer. Volunteering can be a great way to gain work experience. Some possibilities for volunteer work are at: hospitals, animal shelters, zoos, libraries, nursing homes, children's programs and any organization with non-profit status. You will have to apply and interview for volunteer positions because like employers, organizers don't want to waste time on someone who won't work out.

***Paul was interested in the medical field, but wasn't sure specifically what he'd like to do. His parents made a comfortable living which freed him to consider volunteer work. He applied to volunteer at his local hospital. He was given a position where he helped discharged patients to their cars. He was good at what he did and it didn't go unnoticed. When a part-time paid position in the kitchen became available, Paul was asked to apply. He got the job. Paul helped prepare and deliver meals to patients. He loved his job and went on to become a nutritionist.***

Even if your volunteer position doesn't turn into one in which you are paid, there are other, perhaps more valuable payoffs. Volunteer work looks very good on applications for employment, college admissions and college scholarship applications. The money that you sacrifice now will be worth it in the future. You can't put a price on work experience, getting into the college you want or being awarded a scholarship. Besides that, volunteering makes you FEEL AWESOME!



Make a list of what you want to do, places you will go to start looking for a job and people you know who might be helpful in your search.

## Section 1: Who Will Hire Me?

### Picking Up Applications

You should be at the point where you have a list of possible places to work. You will probably fill out several (minimum) applications before being asked to interview. The statistic I've read, keep in mind it's about adults and careers, was that less than 20% of applications received lead to job interviews.

Picking up applications is a lonely activity. Do not take anyone with you. If you want to scream immaturity, take a buddy or a parent with you to pick up applications.

*I was leaving my local grocery store one day and passed the application computer kiosk on my way out. Sitting at the computer filling out a rather lengthy application was a young guy. Standing to the side of him, looking over his shoulder and helping him with his application, was his mom. Unbeknownst to either of them, the store manager was watching them work together on his application.*



It doesn't take a genius to figure out that young man will not get hired for the job. If he cannot pick up or fill out an application on his own, then what would make an employer think he could do a job independently? The point is you want to appear independent and mature. If you can't leave your mommy or your friends at home when trying to find a job, then you're not ready to be an employee.

Employers also don't like to hire friends. Every employer I've had, or those I've talked to, are afraid that friends will be more interested in being friends than they will be in working. Employers pay people to work, not to socialize.

### Creating a Master Application

Before picking up applications, create a master application. Have all the information that an application may ask for. An easy way to do this is fill out the sample application in this book. In modern job hunts, many businesses have the application on a computer in the business. You will be expected to have the needed information readily available. It is a huge pain to memorize, or recreate each time, the information that goes on an application.

If it is an application you can take with you, pick up two. That way, if you mess up on one, you have a backup. Applications turned in with mistakes, cross-outs or white out on them are far less likely to get looked at.



### Keys to Picking up Applications

- Know what you can legally do
- Have an idea of what you want to do
- Use resources available for teens to find job possibilities
- Go alone to pick up or fill out applications
- Create a master application



## **FAQs -Who Will Hire Me?**

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### **Does the economy affect teens' ability to get a job?**

Absolutely! When the economy is in a slump, there is more competition for jobs because there are fewer of them. What this means for you is that you will not only be competing against others your age, but probably older people as well. Doing an application and interview to perfection becomes all the more important.

### **Can I go to a job fair with a friend?**

Yes, but be serious. A job fair is not the place to start messing around with a buddy, or making out with your significant other.

### **Do temporary agencies work with teens?**

Some do, some don't. It doesn't hurt to call. More of them will work with teens for summer employment. Be sure to also ask if there is a cost to you for their services.

### **How can I find what age requirements are at businesses?**

Call them, or ask the next time you visit. They are happy to answer those kinds of questions for you.

### **If I have to be 16 in order to get a job I want, but I am 15 and my 16th birthday is soon, can I still apply for the job?**

I would say that if your 16th birthday is within a week, go ahead and apply. You might want to tell the employer about your age situation when you turn in the application. Assure them you would be 16 by the time you started the job.

### **Will any of my jobs as a teenager help me with my future career?**

Any job you have will help you develop social skills, work ethic and give you workplace experience. All those will help you in the future no matter what career you choose. As far as a specific career, you can look for positions that will do that. For example, if you want to be a dentist, then see if there are any openings in a dentist's office. You will impress the boss if you are interested in their careers.

### **Why can't teens under 18 drive for their job if they have a valid driver's license?**

(This is an Idaho law, but is common in many states) Statistically speaking, teenagers are responsible for the most car accidents. This is probably due to inexperience as a driver. No employer wants to deal with that kind of liability.

### **Even though I can't drive for my work, can I drive to work everyday?**

Absolutely. One of the questions that will be asked in the interview, or maybe even on the application, is how you are going to get to work. Employers want to know you have a reliable way to get there and back. Driving yourself is a reliable form of transportation, and the employer is not liable for what you do in your car if you're not on the clock.

### **Is there a rush to get a job right now?**

In my opinion, no. Your parents may have a different perspective. Keep in mind there is a difference between not being ready and being lazy. One of the things I tell my students about their readiness has to do with references. If you cannot find three adults that can speak positively about your work ethic, you probably have some maturity issues that need some work before you're ready to get a job. That's just one of the measures, however. Some others are the way you feel about it, how you can juggle school and extracurricular activities and what your plans are with your family.