THE FORUM

Virginia's Labor Market & Occupational Information Newsletter

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America's Top 50 Jobs

Though we'd all like to be earning a hefty paycheck, the reality is we're not all investment bankers, Oscar-worthy actors or CEOs. The truth is we're all just regular people trying to make a living at the highest salary our skills, training, and interests will allow. We looked at high-wage, high-growth occupations as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *2006-2007 Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

Here are the top 50 jobs that are both growing faster than the average for total employment (13.0 percent) and have annual earnings above median of $28,770.

1. Registered nurses: $52,330
2. Postsecondary teachers: $51,800
3. General and operations managers: $77,420
4. Elementary school teachers, except special education: $43,160
5. Accountants and auditors: $50,770
6. Business operation specialists, all other: $53,460
7. Computer software engineers, applications: $74,980
8. Maintenance and repair workers, general: $30,710
9. Carpenters: $34,900
10. Computer systems analysts: $66,460

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11. Secondary school teachers, except special and vocational education: $45,650

12. Computer software engineers, systems software: $79,740

13. Physicians and surgeons: $145,600

14. Network systems and data communications analysts: $60,600

15. Auto service technicians and mechanics: $32,450

16. Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses: $33,970

17. Management analysts: $63,450

18. Computer support specialists: $40,430

19. Lawyers: $94,930

20. Network and computer systems administrators: $58,190

21. Police and sheriff's patrol officers: $45,210

22. Middle school teachers, except special and vocational education: $43,670

23. Plumbers, pipe fitters, and steamfitters: $41,290

24. Financial managers: $81,880

25. Computer and information systems managers: $92,570

26. Sales representatives, services, all other: $47,000

27. Fire fighters: $38,330

28. Dental hygienists: $58,350

29. Paralegals and legal assistants: $39,130

30. Sales managers: $84,220

31. Chief executives: $140,350

32. Self-enrichment education teachers: $30,880

33. Physical therapists: $60,180

34. Pharmacists: $84,900

35. Medical and health services managers: $67,430

36. Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products: $58,580

37. Employment, recruitment, and placement specialists: $41,190

38. Property, real estate, and community association managers: $39,980

39. Child, family, and school social workers: $34,820

40. Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers: $36,260

41. Real estate sales agents: $35,670

42. Special education teachers, preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school: $43,570

43. Legal secretaries: $36,720

44. Training and development specialists: $44,570

45. First-line supervisors/managers of housekeeping and janitorial workers: $29,510

46. Administrative services managers: $60,290

47. Public relations specialists: $43,830

48. Radiological technologists and technicians: $43,350

49. Sales and related workers, all other: $31,380

50. Personal financial advisors: $62,700

Source: *Kate Lorenz@CareerBuilder.com*

No Degree? No Problem—10 High-Paying Jobs

Higher education and higher income often go hand in hand. But a college diploma certainly isn't the only ticket to the gravy train—just ask Microsoft co-founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen. These two college dropouts are now among the wealthiest people in the United States, with an estimated combined net worth of $72 billion. They have plenty of company. Five of the six richest self-made billionaires on *Forbes* magazine's list of wealthiest people in the nation didn't finish college.

Exceptional performers or entrepreneurs in nearly any industry can command enormous salaries. The following jobs, however, consistently boast high pay, with nationwide average salaries far above the norm—and no degree is required.

1. Air Traffic Controller—$105,820

The job: Organizing and controlling the flow of airplanes into and out of an airport.

How to get it: You may not need a college degree, but getting hired as an air traffic controller isn't easy. Candidates need four years of college and/or three years of work experience before undergoing pre-employment testing. Once they make the cut, they must complete the FAA Academy and an additional training program before starting work.

2. Real Estate Broker—$76,930

The job: Helping clients sell their residential property.

How to get it: To obtain a broker's license, candidates need 60 to 90 hours of formal classroom training, and one to three years of real estate sales experience.

3. Transportation Manager—$75,130

The job: Working out the logistics for transportation firms, including mapping out the best routes and estimating demand.

How to get it: Experience driving a truck or working in transportation sales is the most common route to this occupation. Just over half of transportation managers have some college experience, but less than one-quarter completed a bachelor's degree.

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(No Degree? No Problem—10 High Paying Jobs continued from page 3)

4. Non-Retail Sales Supervisor—$73,670

The job: Hiring, training, supervising, and scheduling the work of sales workers, including cashiers and customer service representatives.

How to get it: Many supervisors start out on the sales floor and work their way up the organization. Good conversational skills, problem-solving ability, and computer literacy are crucial.

5. Nuclear Power Reactor Operator—$66,900

The job: Running the machinery at nuclear reactors.

How to get it: Operating a nuclear power reactor requires extensive training by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which includes a mix of classroom work and on-the-job instruction. To obtain a license, candidates must pass an annual practical exam and may be subjected to drug screenings.

6. Gaming Manager—$65,920

The job: Creating game policies and managing the day-to-day responsibilities at a casino.

How to get it: Work experience is the primary requirement. Many gaming managers start out as dealers or other casino floor workers.

7. Power Distributor—$59,510

The job: Controlling the flow of electricity through lines to industrial plants or substations.

How to get it: A high school diploma is usually required, and candidates undergo extensive on-the-job training and classroom instruction.

8. Detective—$58,750

The job: Gathering facts and evidence to help solve crimes.

How to get it: Detectives usually begin as police officers and get promoted to detective after a probationary period that ranges from six months to three years.

9. Elevator Repairer—$58,500

The job: Installing, repairing and maintaining elevators and escalators.

How to get it: Most new repairers apply through the local chapter of the International Union of Elevator Constructors. To qualify for an apprenticeship, candidates must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or GED, pass an aptitude test and be in good physical shape.

10. Ship Engineer—$57,290

The job: Operating and maintaining machinery on a ship, including propulsion engines, generators, and pumps.

How to get it: Most water transportation occupations require a license from the U.S. Coast Guard. Applicants must accumulate a certain number of hours at sea and pass a written exam, physical exam, drug screening, and National Driver Register Check to be considered.

Source: *By Laura Morsch, CareerBuilder.com; Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Six Interview Mistakes

1. **Interrogation Versus Interview:** Most candidates expect they will be interrogated. An interrogation is when one person asks all the questions and the other gives the answers. An interview is a business conversation where both people ask and respond to questions. Too many job seekers believe an interview is an interrogation. With this attitude, candidates do not ask questions and hence do not make their best impression. You need to ask questions throughout the interview. If you don't, you force the interview to be an interrogation.

2. **Making a Positive Out of a Weakness:** Unskilled interviewers frequently ask candidates "What are your weaknesses?" Conventional interview advice recommends you highlight a weakness like "I'm a perfectionist" and turn it into a positive. Interviewers are not fooled. If you are asked this question highlight a skill that you wish to improve upon and (most importantly) describe what you are proactively doing to enhance your skill in this area. Interviewers don't care what your weaknesses are. They want to see how you handle the question and what your answer indicates about you.

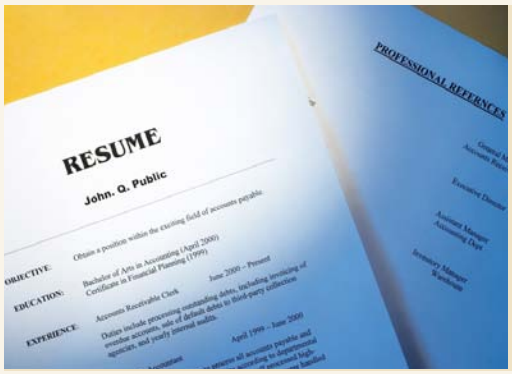
3. **No Questions:** Every interview concludes with the interviewer asking if you have any questions. The worst thing to say is you have no questions. Having no questions prepared indicates you are not interested and not prepared. Interviewers are more impressed by the questions you ask than the selling points you try to make. Before each interview make a list of 5 questions you will ask.

4. **Only Researching the Company; What About You?** Candidates intellectually prepare by researching the company. Most job seekers do not research themselves by taking inventory of their experience, knowledge, and skills. Formulating a talent inventory prepares you to immediately respond to any question about your experience. You must be prepared to discuss any part of your background. Creating your talent inventory refreshes your memory and helps you immediately remember experiences you would otherwise have forgotten during the interview. Interview Mastery gives you a talent inventory template and many other job search downloads.

5. **Leaving Cell Phone On:** We may live in a wired, always available society, but a ringing cell phone is not appropriate for an interview. Turn it off before you enter the company.

6. **Waiting for a Call:** Time is your enemy after the interview. After you send a thank you e-mail and note to every interviewer, follow-up a couple days later with either a question or additional information. Contact the person who can hire you, not HR (Human Resources). HR is famous for not returning calls. Additional information can be details about your talents, a recent competitor's press release or industry trends. Your intention is to keep their memory of you fresh.

Source: *Michael R. Neece, CEO Interview Mastery, @Net-temps.com*



Five Easy Ways to Improve Your Résumé

Ah, the wisdom of teen movies. Remember in "Clueless" when Cher and Dionne gave Miss Geist a makeover in the faculty lounge? All it took was a few minor adjustments to turn the disheveled teacher into "not a total Betty, but a vast improvement." The same principle can be applied to your résumé.

Look at your résumé: Would you still be compelled to read it if it wasn't your own, or would the vast array of typos, unusual fonts, long sentences, and obscure language turn you away? While your résumé may not be a full-on Monet (meaning, up close, it's a big old mess), it may simply need some minor tweaking in order to get noticed. Take these five small steps to see big results.

1. Spell check… the old-fashioned way.
Spelling and grammar errors can be the kiss of death for résumés: They show employers that you don't pay attention to detail. Computer spell-check programs don't always pick up these errors, so make sure you proofread it yourself before handing it in. For insurance and a fresh perspective, have a friend look it over, too.

2. Put it in reverse chronological order.
Organize your résumé to reflect your most recent job at the top and include dates of employment. Employers tend to prefer these over functional résumés, which can be great if you're switching career paths, but otherwise make it difficult to determine when you worked where and can hide employment gaps.

3. Simplify your language.
Keep your sentences short and don't worry about fragments.

- Leave out personal pronouns like "I," "my," and "me." Saying, "I performed" this or "I demonstrated" that is redundant. Who else would you be talking about if not yourself?
- Omit the articles "a," "an," and "the." Instead of "Coordinated the special events for the alumni association," simplify it to say, "Coordinated alumni association special events."
- Take out terms like "assisted in," "participated in," and "helped with." If you assisted in managing client accounts, simply say, "Managed client accounts." You can explain later what this role entailed.
- Change passive statements to active verbs. Saying "Coordinated client meetings" instead of "Ensured client meetings were coordinated" adds punch and clarity to a job description.
- Exclude words like "responsibilities" and "duties" under job listings. Your résumé should focus on accomplishments, not tasks.

4. Eliminate clutter.
Format your résumé for consistency and easy reading.

- Bold, italicize or underline important headlines (just don't do all three at once—that's overkill).
- Create a bulleted list—not a paragraph formation—for job descriptions
- Use a standard font like 11 point Times New Roman or Arial. Fancier fonts are not only harder to read, but they may become garbled in an e-mail format.
- Combine series of short, odd jobs into one listing. (For example: "1999-2002 Barista – Village Café, Starbucks, Seattle's Best…")

5. Read it aloud.
Reading your résumé aloud will help you identify areas that need improvement or clarification. If something doesn't sound right to you, it won't sound right to a hiring manager.

Source: *Mary Lorenz @ CareerBuilder.com*

To order materials, please indicate the number of items requested on the line to the left of the product name and mail or fax to:

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Products Order Form

These products are available at no charge, except where noted.

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_____ *Bookmark*—the high school graduate versus the high school dropout

Also on VELMA‡ _____ *Industry and Occupational Employment Projections: Statewide and Workforce Investment Areas (WIA) 2002–2012**

_____ *Job Interview Pocket Résumé*—small tri-fold résumé that fits in a wallet or pocket

Also on website _____ *Virginia's Mid-Atlantic Guide to Information on Careers* (MAGIC)—contains information on job training, education, job-seeking, and careers
Minimal fee charged for orders outside Virginia. Contact us for details.

Also on website _____ *Virginia Business Resource Directory*—how to start your own business
_____ hard copy
_____ CD-ROM

Also on website _____ *Virginia Job Outlook*—top occupations, growth rate, and annual average salaries by educational attainment

_____‡*Virginia Labor Market Information Directory**—listing and description of VEC publications, products, special services, and data delivery systems

Display posters
_____ *Skills Needed for Success in the Workplace*—24″ × 18″
_____ *Visualize - Starting Your Own Business*—24″ × 18″
_____ *Interview Tips*—18″ × 24″

One-page information sheets—camera-ready version to print multiple copies. **Check desired information sheet.**
_____ *Eight Keys to Employability*
_____ *Fastest-Growing Occupations, U.S. Data*
_____ *Sample Application Form*
_____ *Ten Most-Wanted Skills*
_____ *Education Pays . . .*

Available only on VELMA‡ *Occupational Wage Data Report: 2006**
United States
Statewide, Virginia
Local Workforce Investment Areas
Virginia Metropolitan Wage Data (MSAs)
Occupational Employment Statistical Regions
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* *Reference materials only.*
‡ *Access VELMA:* velma.virtuallmi.com.

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Virginia Employment Commission

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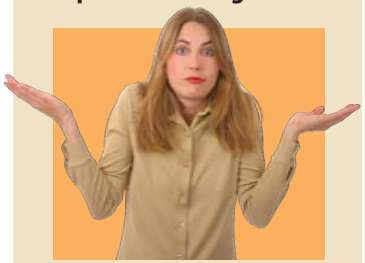
You Can Prepare Yourself to Succeed in Your Studies

Try to develop and appreciate the following habits:

- **Take responsibility for yourself**
  Recognize that in order to succeed, you need to make decisions about your priorities, your time, and your resources.
- **Center yourself around your values and principles**
  Don't let friends and acquaintances dictate what you consider important.
- **Put first things first**
  Follow up on the priorities you have set for yourself, and don't let others, or other interests, distract you from your goals.
- **Discover your key productivity periods and places**
  Morning, afternoon, or evening?
  Find spaces where you can be the most focused and productive. Prioritize these for your most difficult study challenges.
- **Consider yourself in a win-win situation**
  When you contribute your best to a class, you, your fellow students, and even your teacher will benefit. Your grade can then be one additional check on your performance.
- **First understand others, then attempt to be understood**
  When you have an issue with an instructor (a questionable grade, an assignment deadline, etc.) put yourself in the instructor's place. Now ask yourself how you can best make your argument given his/her situation.
- **Look for better solutions to problems**
  For example, if you don't understand the course material, don't just re-read it. Try something else! Consult with the professor, a tutor, an academic advisor, a classmate, a study group, or your school's study skills center.
- **Look to continually challenge yourself**

Source: *Stephen Covey, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

People Are Asking...



What is the GED?

The General Equivalency Diploma (GED) is five tests that measure skills that correspond to those of recent high school graduates. The skills tested include: understanding and applying information; evaluating, analyzing; and drawing conclusions; and expressing ideas and opinions in writing. After you pass these five tests, you will receive a credential that certifies your 12th grade-level abilities in reading, writing, social studies, science, and mathematics. Many adults who did not graduate from high school have developed skills through work, community, family, and study experiences. The GED tests allow those adults to demonstrate academic abilities that are equivalent to those of high school graduates. For more information, contact **1-877-37-MY-GED (1-877-376-9433).**

Source: *www.vaged.vcu.edu.*

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