Initiative  A successful interview is an important part of getting a job. Choose three early childhood jobs that interest you. For each job, make a list of questions that you would need to ask to learn more about the position. Then review all the lists and underline related question topics. How could these related topics help you plan for an interview?

Writing Tips
1. Start with a key word or phrase as you write each question.
2. Add ideas and phrases as they occur to you.
3. Do not worry about keeping your ideas in order.
4. Review your lists to look for related ideas.

Finding a job takes preparation. What steps do you need to take in order to get a job?
### Read to Learn

**Key Concepts**
- **Describe** the basic employability skills that applicants need for positions in early childhood care.
- **List** the qualities of effective leaders.
- **Outline** the steps of the job application and hiring process and the required actions at each step.
- **Summarize** the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers.

**Main Idea**
Employers look for specific skills and characteristics in employees. Finding a job requires careful preparation of application materials and making a good impression at an interview. Both employees and employers have rights and responsibilities.

### Content Vocabulary
- active listening
- body language
- work ethic
- flexibility
- networking
- trade publications
- service learning
- résumé
- prioritize
- empathy
- ethics
- workers’ compensation
- minimum wage
- compensatory time
- labor union
- collective bargaining
- discrimination
- sexual harassment
- probation

### Academic Vocabulary
- foundation
- responsibility

### Graphic Organizer
As you read, you will identify skills and characteristics that can help you succeed as an employee. Use a two-column chart like the one shown to help you organize the information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Employee Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Graphic Organizer* Go to connected.mcgraw-hill.com to print this Graphic Organizer.
Sharpening Your Basic Skills

Whether your career goal is to be a child care center owner, a preschool teacher, or a camp counselor, your next step is to sharpen the skills you need to start your professional career. Every employer expects you to have certain basic skills. These are general skills that provide you with a strong foundation, or base that you build upon, for finding and keeping a job and advancing in your career. Basic skills can also transfer from job to job. Communication, math, thinking, technology, and information skills are critical to helping you succeed in furthering your education and career.

Communication Skills

Effective communication skills are essential to any career. As a child care professional, your skills in speaking, writing, reading, and listening will play an important role in how well you exchange information and build relationships with children and their families. Choose a communication strategy appropriate for the task or situation to ensure effective communication.

Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are needed to organize ideas and communicate to individuals, to small and large groups, and to both children and adults. Verbal communication is most effective when you present information in a clear and organized way. How well other people understand you depends upon how clearly you speak. Pronounce words clearly and correctly, and speak at a pace appropriate for your audience.

Listening Skills

You will be listening constantly at work. Listening is not just appearing to hear what a person has said to you. You must listen to understand the meaning of the speaker’s words, a skill called **active listening**. To be an active listener, avoid distractions and focus on what the speaker says. Paraphrase the speaker to show that you understand. Ask questions if you do not understand or need clarification.
Read to Understand
Whether reading care instructions or reading a story to children, effective reading skills are important for child care professionals. Why is it important for child care professionals to read for understanding?

- **Preview.** Read headlines and subtitles to get an overview.
- **Skim.** Look over the reading material for key points.
- **Focus.** Give what you are reading your full attention. As you read, think about what you are reading.
- **Use context clues.** Use clues within the text to help you determine the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases.
- **Visualize.** Form mental pictures or charts of the events, characters, and details of what you are reading.
- **Check comprehension.** Ask yourself how well you understand what you just read.

### Body Language

You might not be aware of it, but you also speak without saying a word through your body language. **Body language** is the way you move your hands and arms, hold your body, and use facial expressions. It reveals your feelings and reactions to what you say or hear. You can also observe and interpret another speaker’s body language to pick up on emotions that the person does not say aloud. Pay attention to body language to practice effective nonverbal communication skills.

### Writing Skills

Your ability to communicate in writing will help you find a job and perform well on the job. Job applications, business forms, and everyday work correspondence such as memos and e-mails require strong writing skills and good grammar. In providing child care services, you will document care in children’s records and write letters to parents and memos to staff. Consider your audience and style when writing:

- **Audience.** Picture who will be reading your writing. Adjust what and how you write to what the reader needs to understand your message.
- **Writing style.** Your writing style comes from your choice of words and the tone, or attitude, that your words convey to the reader. Be direct and use a professional tone. Always follow basic grammar and punctuation rules. Use proper tense and syntax, and carefully proofread your writing before hitting the send button on an e-mail or mailing a letter.

### Reading Skills

Reading is a very important skill. Much of the information you receive on the job is gained from reading. Child care professionals use their reading skills in many ways. They read work policies and communications and care instructions from family members. They also use reading skills to keep updated on research findings for ongoing professional development. **Figure 2.1** above describes reading techniques that can help you improve your reading skills.
Math Skills

The ability to work with numbers is a fundamental part of almost every job. You will add, subtract, multiply, and divide, and use fractions, percentages, and decimals frequently in the workplace. For example, you will use basic math skills to keep track of your work hours, wages, and vacation days. Child care directors use math skills to order supplies, complete payroll and tax forms, and maintain budgets. Sharpening your basic math skills will improve your success as a child care professional.

Thinking Skills

Employers desire employees who can think creatively and make good decisions based on reasons and facts. An employee who can think critically can respond quickly and properly to a variety of situations. For example, if a fire alarm sounds during nap or rest time, you must react immediately to evacuate children as safely as possible.

Making good decisions shows employee responsibility. Employers also value employees that can resolve small problems before they become big issues. An employee who finds quick, practical solutions to problems will help a care team provide quality child care.

Technology Skills

Knowing how to use a computer and other current technologies is essential for today’s workplace. You will use technology to access, manage, and create information. Depending on your child care facility, you may need to learn how to operate a security system or update information on a Web site. During your career, you will need to keep up with the many changes and advances in technology.

Information Skills

Information comes from countless sources during your workday. To be a successful employee, you must learn and practice how to acquire and use information appropriately. Learn the difference between reliable and useful information and opinions, which can contain false or misleading information. An effective employee must be able to make sense of his or her own research and successfully communicate it to employers, coworkers, and parents. This requires knowing how to understand and interpret information in a variety of formats such as graphs, reports, manuals, and schedules.

Financial Literacy

Starting Salaries
Taylor, a director of a local child care center, researched starting salaries for child care workers in her state and neighboring states. She found the following starting salaries in four different states: $26,700, $24,545, $22,068, and $21,320. What is the average starting salary for a child care worker in Taylor’s region? If the starting salary for a child care worker at her center is $23,850, how much is this above or below the regional average?

Math Concept
Measures of Central Tendency
The mean, median, and mode are all measures of central tendency because they provide a summary of numerical data in one number. The mean is the same as the average.

Starting Hint
To find the mean, add all the values ($26,700, $24,545, $22,068, and $21,320) together. Then divide the total by the number of values in the set of data (4).

For more math practice, go to the Math Appendix at the back of the book.
Work Ethic

In addition to skills, employers look for certain key qualities in employees. Employers want employees who have productive work habits and attitudes. Demonstrating these traits shows a strong work ethic—a personal commitment to work hard and do one’s very best. The qualities that mark a strong work ethic include responsibility, commitment, reliability, flexibility, and honesty.

Responsibility and Commitment

Showing responsibility is one of the most important qualifications for success in any job. Responsibility means showing up for work on time. It means carrying out your job duties, even when your boss is not around. When you are responsible, you accept the consequences of your actions.

Commitment is a quality that supports your other abilities and skills. You show that you are committed to your job by following all procedures, supporting your coworkers, and doing your duties very well. Committed employees show enthusiasm for their job. They make the most of opportunities to improve their abilities and to learn new skills. Demonstrating commitment to quality and excellence on the job will set you apart as a valuable employee.

Reliability and Flexibility

Reliability means that you perform as your employer expects time after time. Reliable employees carry out assigned tasks without being reminded and with minimal supervision. Flexibility, the ability to adapt willingly to change, is very important in the workplace. Flexibility on the job means dealing with change without complaining. The more confident that you are in your skills, the easier you will find it to be flexible.

Honesty

Honesty is an important part of a strong work ethic. You show honesty on the job when you are truthful in what you say and do. For example, if you make a mistake, it is honest behavior to admit your error and to find out ways to prevent making the mistake again. You do not cover up the mistake or blame someone else. Employers insist on honesty, and some consider dishonesty reason for firing.

Valuable Employee

Doing repetitive tasks such as preparing art supplies without complaining shows a good work ethic. How else can an employee show a good work ethic?

READING CHECK

Summarize What skills and qualities do you need to be a successful employee?
Leadership Skills

Employers look for employees with leadership qualities. Leadership is the ability to motivate others to accomplish goals. Every person has an individual leadership style. Some people lead quietly, preferring to lead by example. Other leaders are more vocal, frequently giving encouragement. Some leaders become involved in every part of a job. Others prefer to stay in the background until they are needed. All effective leaders share key qualities that get the job done and keep the group together.

Qualities of Effective Leaders

Effective leaders have certain qualities that are helpful in creating a productive work environment. These qualities include:

- **Integrity.** Good leaders are honest and trustworthy. They are dependable and straightforward in communicating with others. They use good judgment based on solid values and principles in working with others.

- **Vision.** Good leaders are open minded and future oriented. They look to the future for opportunities and challenges. They use their vision and creativity to motivate others.

- **Perseverance.** Good leaders are persistent even when faced with difficult challenges. They keep focused and find and use resources to achieve desired goals.

- **Consideration.** Effective leaders are aware and considerate of the feelings of others. They take time to listen to others’ ideas.

- **Team oriented.** Good leaders are committed to the team effort. They collaborate, or work well with others, to achieve a common goal. They identify and value the differing backgrounds, viewpoints, skills, and talents of others on the team.
Effective leaders maintain a high level of commitment to their goals and the workers who help them achieve these goals. Effective leaders also desire to reach the highest standards of quality in any task. To achieve these high standards, good leaders regularly monitor team members’ work. All members of a team can display leadership skills by supporting the common team goal, taking initiative to accomplish team tasks, and sharing constructive opinions and concerns about the team’s plan and direction.

Developing your leadership skills will help you as you move along your career path. Employers look among their employees for those whom others respect and who can also handle more responsibility. They consider these employees first for higher-level positions. One way to improve leadership skills is through participation in educational and professional organizations.

**Leadership Programs**

Many organizations and programs have been designed to help students develop leadership skills. Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) is a national organization of middle and high school students who are either currently taking or have taken Family and Consumer Sciences courses. FCCLA activities provide opportunities for personal, career, and leadership development through activities and competitive events. Student members participate in challenging competitions such as the Students Taking Action with Recognition (STAR) Events. For example, the Early Childhood event challenges students to submit a portfolio, develop a lesson plan, and present the lesson to demonstrate their abilities in this career area.

SkillsUSA is another organization that helps students develop leadership skills. SkillsUSA is a national organization of high school and college students enrolled in training programs for technical, skilled, and service occupations. SkillsUSA programs partner students with industry professionals to provide SkillsUSA Championships. Students enrolled in occupational child care and early childhood programs can participate in the Preschool Teaching Assistant contest. Students are judged on their abilities to plan and present appropriate activities for preschool children and their general knowledge of quality child care.

**Leadership in Action**

Leadership organizations help students learn and practice leadership skills. What are other ways you could develop your leadership skills?

**Reading Check** Connect How can all team members show leadership skills?
Seeking Employment

Your career as a child care professional begins with your first job. Finding a job can be a challenging process, but the key to a successful job search is to be patient. Your job search will become at least a part-time job in itself. It is also important to stay organized and to take initiative on job leads, or opportunities.

Employment Resources

Job opportunities come from many sources, such as newspaper classified ads, online job boards, and word-of-mouth. Your job search will demand that you tap many kinds of resources. Because you will learn of many job possibilities and meet many people, you will need to keep records for successful follow-up. Develop an organization system to keep track of job leads and what you have done to pursue each lead.

Networking

Networking is the most direct and successful way of finding a job. Networking means making use of all your personal and professional contacts to further your career goals. If you have ever asked a family member or friend about a job possibility, you have practiced networking. You can also network with:

- **Teachers and Mentors.** These adults know your strengths and how you could apply them in a child care setting. These are also individuals who you may ask for reference letters.
- **Friends and Classmates.** Other people who are interested in careers similar to yours will also be researching jobs. They may be willing to share information with you.
- **Employers and Coworkers.** If you already have a job, most employers post job opportunities internally before advertising them to the general public. Your coworkers also may also know about job openings outside of your workplace.
- **Organizations.** School organizations and community groups can often provide job information.

Building a strong network takes time. Every referral, or job lead, you receive through networking should be treated with respect. If someone gives you a job lead, follow up with the employer responsibly. Your dress and behavior not only reflect on you, but also the person who recommended you. Remember to return the favor—share job information with people in your network.
The Internet
The Internet is an important job-search tool. Thousands of employment resources are available on the Internet. There are many Web sites that provide quality job-search and career-building information. You can review job postings online and apply for jobs electronically. You can network with people around the world by participating in social network communities.

Professional Organizations
Another source of job resources is professional organizations that have members who are involved in various aspects of caring for children. Many have Web sites that list jobs on their staffs, as well as positions at member companies or member programs. Figure 2.2 lists professional organizations you may want to explore.

You may have to pay a membership fee to join a professional organization. Many organizations have student chapters in high schools and colleges. The services they offer their members may include job listings, job placement services, scholarships, workshops, and conferences, which provide networking opportunities. Early childhood positions listed with professional organizations usually require more education and skills than those listed in local resources and, consequently, offer higher salaries.

Most early childhood professional organizations publish professional magazines and newsletters for their members. They are called trade publications because they are written for people in an industry by organizations that support the industry. These publications contain helpful articles on all aspects of the industry and often list job opportunities.

Figure 2.2 Early Childhood Professional Organizations

Professional Resources Membership fees may include a subscription to a professional organization’s publications. How might you use trade publications throughout your career?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Organization</th>
<th>Publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Association for the Education of Young Children</td>
<td>Young Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NAEYC)</td>
<td>Teaching Young Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral</td>
<td>Annual reports and research reports on specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies (NACCRA)</td>
<td>topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Coalition for Campus Children’s Centers (NCCCC)</td>
<td>Fact sheets and newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)</td>
<td>Childhood Education, Childhood Explorer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council for Professional Recognition (CDA)</td>
<td>Journal of Research in Childhood Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Social Workers (NASW)</td>
<td>Journals and brochures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)</td>
<td>Journal of Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Agencies

An employment agency may assist in your job search. Employment agencies are businesses that work for employers and seek potential employees for them. They keep lists of their clients’ job openings and potential applicants. They will submit an applicant’s credentials to the employer for consideration for a fee.

Temporary agencies offer fast placement for people looking for an entry-level position. Employers who have an ongoing need for child care professionals may rely on temporary agencies to fill their demand. This hiring arrangement gives the employer a chance to assess each agency employee as a potential team member without going through the company’s hiring process. Working through a temporary agency gives you a chance to see what the child care field is like without committing to a certain employer.

Volunteering and Internships

Although volunteers do not usually get paid, they do gain valuable career experience. The information you learn can help you make valuable career decisions in the future. To gain experience working with children, consider volunteering at a preschool, library, hospital, recreation center, or child care center.

Internships are another way to gain valuable career experience. An internship is a more formal position and requires a longer time commitment than a volunteer position. Internships may be unpaid or paid depending upon the situation. Through hands-on experience at the work site, interns gain vital job skills. Internships can sometimes lead to full time, paid employment.

In addition to volunteering and internships, many schools offer service learning opportunities. Service learning is community service that is part of your schoolwork. For example, you might work at your community early childhood center while taking early childhood education classes.
Applying for a Job

When you have identified several job leads, you can begin applying for jobs. Most employers will first ask you to fill out an application form, either on paper or electronically. Many employers also ask you to submit a cover letter and a résumé. It is important to follow the directions for each job lead and submit only what the employer requests. Employers will be interested in the skills you have to offer. They also observe how you write, dress, speak, and behave during the job application and interview process. It is important to perform each step of the process in a professional manner.

Job Applications

Remember to make a good impression from the beginning. Do not walk into a potential workplace, even to ask for an application, unless your clothing is neat and appropriate and you are clean and well groomed. It is absolutely essential that you demonstrate appropriate appearance for the workplace when applying for a job.

Even if an application form is not your first step, you will be asked to complete one at some point during the process. You must fill out the form correctly and completely. Job application forms vary, but they all ask for the same kinds of information. Keep these tips in mind when completing an application:

▶ Read the instructions for completing each section before responding.
▶ Print neatly, using blue or black ink.
▶ Assemble key application information in one place. This includes your Social Security number; driver’s license number; and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of previous employers along with the dates of your employment.
▶ You will also need the complete names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your personal references. Be sure to get permission from the people on your reference list before using their names.
▶ Do not leave any part of the application form blank unless you are asked to do so. If a question does not apply, write N/A, which means “not applicable,” in the space provided.
▶ Always tell the truth. Submitting false information is illegal.
How to . . .

Prepare Your Résumé

Your résumé will likely be the first contact an employer has with you. As with all first impressions, you want to leave a good one. A résumé should include your contact information, job objective, and relevant education, work experience, skills and abilities, awards and honors, and professional and community activities.

Simon Smith
105 Elm Street
Culver, IN 46511
(555) 555-5555
simon.smith@email.com

OBJECTIVE
An entry level teaching assistant position as a step toward a career in an early childhood education

EXPERIENCE
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), Franklin High School Chapter, Culver, Indiana
Chapter President. September 2011–present.
• Developed agenda for and lead class meetings.
• Represented chapter at national leadership meetings.
• Won silver medal in Early Childhood Star Event.

Little League Baseball, Culver Department of Parks and Recreation, Culver, Indiana Assistant Coach. May 2011–present.
• Organized and led practice sessions for 15 second-graders.
• Managed parent communications, including team blog and email newsletters.

National Honor Society, Franklin High School, Culver, Indiana Secretary. September 2011–present.
• Coordinated fundraiser that raised $3,000 for local food pantry.

EDUCATION & TRAINING
Franklin High School, Culver, Indiana
Diploma expected June 2014. GPA: 3.8/4.0
National Honor Society member.
• Completed Early Childhood Education and Child Development classes.

Red Cross First Aid with CPR Training Program
Certificate of Completion, April 2011.

SKILLS
• Proficient in Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative Suite.
• Experienced babysitter.
• Proven ability to teach young children.
• Ability to speak and write basic Spanish.

➤ Have a Clear Objective  Your job objective should be short and to the point. State specifically what type of position you are looking for.

➤ Use Key Words  Key words are significant words that employers use to search for relevant information about your skills and work experience. Employers use key words to search for resumes on the Internet.

➤ Look Professional  A well-designed, error-free résumé will stand out from other applicants. Avoid decorative graphics. Use correct spelling and grammar.

➤ Highlight Skills and Experience  Stress relevant work experience, key skills, education, and training. If your work experience is limited, organize your résumé by the kinds of skills you have, such as communication and technical skills. Use action words to describe your skills and experience.

➤ Be Accurate and Concise  Include accurate contact information and honest descriptions of your experience. Do not include information unless it is related to the job you are applying to.

Apply It!
Create your résumé for a specific career in early childhood care and education.
Preparing Your Résumé

A résumé (ˈre-zə-ˌmā) is a summary of your career objectives, work experience, qualifications, education, and training. Your résumé is a very important job-seeking tool. It gives a prospective employer the information he or she needs to help determine if you are right for the position. When preparing your résumé, always be truthful and accurate. List your work experience, skills, and education or training that will convince an employer that you are the best candidate for the job.

Writing Your Cover Letter

Responding to a job lead often requires you to submit a cover letter to accompany your résumé. A cover letter introduces yourself to your prospective employer. It is an opportunity to “sell yourself” by highlighting your best qualities. Figure 2.3 on page 34 shows a sample cover letter. Here are some tips for creating a professional, attention-getting cover letter:

▸ Keep it short. Your cover letter should not be longer than one page.

▸ Explain why you are writing. The first sentence of your letter should describe what position you are applying for and where you heard of the opening.

▸ Introduce yourself. Give a short description of your background and professional abilities. Refer to your attached résumé and highlight one or two specific accomplishments.

▸ Sell yourself. Your cover letter should leave the reader thinking, “This person is exactly what we are looking for.” Relate your skills and experience to the responsibilities described in the job listing. For example, if the job ad lists specific skills or knowledge required, mention your mastery of these in your letter.

Creating Your Portfolio

A portfolio is a collection of work samples that demonstrate your skills. The work samples are assembled in a binder, folder, or in a digital format. Portfolios are presented to potential employers to show how well prepared you are for a particular job. An early childhood portfolio may include items such as sample lesson plans, sample menus, teacher evaluations of work, and observations of child development.

Do Your Research

As you prepare your cover letter and résumé, research the position and relate your skills and experience to the position. Why is it important to use key words in your application materials?
3008 Oak Street  
Springdale, GA 33333  
(555) 555-5555

May 31, 20—

Ms. Janelle Kirchner, Director  
Willow Grove Preschool  
6245 Groveland Avenue  
Springdale, GA 33333

Dear Ms. Kirchner:

I am responding to your ad in last Sunday’s Journal seeking a teacher’s aide for the morning pre-kindergarten class. I would like to apply for this position.

On June 3, I will graduate from Jefferson High School. In addition to the required classes, I have taken child development and child care classes to prepare for a career in early childhood education. I am an active member of the local Family, Career and Community Leaders (FCCLA) chapter.

During my last year in high school, I was enrolled in a work-experience program as a teacher’s aide at Sunnydale Preschool. I enjoy working with children and they respond very positively to me.

I would like the opportunity to schedule an interview to discuss the position and my qualifications. You can reach me at (555) 555-5555. Thank you for considering me as a future employee.

Sincerely,

Carla Fuentes
The Interview Process

When you have completed the application process, you must prepare for your interview. During this important face-to-face meeting, you will have a chance to convince an employer that you are the right person for the job. The employer will evaluate your appearance, attitude, personality, and answers to his or her questions.

Before the Interview

The interview process starts when an employer schedules an appointment. Write down the date, time, place of the interview, and the name of the contact person. These tips will help you prepare for a successful interview:

► Do your homework. The more you know about your prospective employer and the job you are seeking, the better you will do in the interview. Learn about market trends in the industry. Check such resources as community business publications, local newspapers, Internet directories, and professional organizations.

► Choose appropriate clothing. An employer’s first impression of you will be based on your appearance. Choose business clothing that fits properly, is clean, pressed, and in good condition and is appropriate for the job you are applying for. Do not wear jeans or sandals. Your hair and nails should be clean, trimmed, and neat.

► Be prompt and courteous. On the day of the interview, allow plenty of time to locate your destination. Arrive early and practice appropriate business and personal etiquette. As you introduce yourself to a receptionist, guard, or other person before meeting with the interviewer, be polite and respectful. The interviewer may check with these people later.

Look Your Best

The first impression you make at an interview will be through your appearance. What can you do to make sure you look your best when meeting potential employers?
**During the Interview**

Because the interview is so important in the hiring process, you will do well if you are prepared, positive, and relaxed. Keep the following points in mind:

- **Shake hands.** The interviewer will introduce him- or herself to you. Introduce yourself in return, and give a firm, confident handshake. The interviewer will welcome you to the interview location and initiate the discussion. He or she will probably begin with a few simple questions to help you feel more at ease.

- **Make eye contact.** Throughout the interview, maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Eye contact helps show that you are listening and are interested in what the interviewer is saying.

- **Be poised and relaxed.** Sit up straight, with both feet on the floor. Avoid nervous gestures such as fidgeting or tapping a pencil. Never chew gum during an interview.

- **Answer thoughtfully and completely.** The interviewer will ask questions designed to determine if you are the person the company needs. Use correct grammar and speak clearly in your answers. Do not interrupt the interviewer. If you do not understand a question or do not know the answer, say so politely. Figure 2.4 lists common interview questions.

- **Ask questions.** The interview process is meant to help you gain information, too. Do not hesitate to ask the interviewer about the nature of the job, the job responsibilities, and the working environment. You should not raise questions about the rate of pay and employee benefits, such as insurance, during the first interview unless the interviewer addresses them. Most employers use the first interview to narrow the applicants to one or two. In the second interview, employers will get more specific about pay and benefits.

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**Figure 2.4 Common Interview Questions**

**Be Prepared**
Interviewers often ask similar questions in order to get a sense of a job candidate’s skills, abilities, and interests. *How should you prepare for an interview?*

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why would you like to work for this company?
- What are your qualifications for this job?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
- Tell me about a challenge you met or a problem you solved in school or on a job.
- What do you like best and least about teamwork?
- What questions do you have about the position or this company?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why do you want to work with children?
Close the interview on a positive note. If the interviewer does not explain to you the next steps, such as the time period for second interviews or hiring decisions, ask. Thank the interviewer for his or her time. A professional attitude will always be remembered. Shake hands as you leave.

After the Interview

The interview process does not end when the interview is over. After each interview, you have the following responsibilities:

Send a thank-you letter. The day after the interview, send the interviewer a handwritten or typed thank-you letter for the interview. Do this even if you are no longer interested in the position or have been turned down for the job. You may apply for another position with this employer at some point in the future and want to leave a good impression.

Follow up. If you have been asked to contact the employer, do so as requested. Send any materials or information requested, such as reference letters. If the employer has promised to contact you, wait the specified amount of time. If this time passes, call the employer and politely request information about the status of your application. You may be asked to go through a second interview.

A Successful Interview

A smile and a firm handshake help make a good first impression at a job interview. How can you show confidence to a potential employer?
Review the session. As soon as possible after the interview, go over the session in your mind. Think about the impression you made. Make notes on what questions you were asked and anything you could do to improve during the next interview. Note any key information, such as employer expectations and job responsibilities. List any unanswered questions you have about the job.

Responding to a Job Offer

Before you accept a job offer, it is important to determine if the job is the right one for you. Ask yourself: Is the offered wage fair? Will I be able to get along with my manager? How much time will I spend traveling to and from the job? Will the job require working extra hours? Is there opportunity for professional growth in the position? When you have considered these questions, you are ready to respond to a job offer in one of three ways:

- **Accept the offer.** The employer will give you specific details on pay, benefits, schedules, job expectations, and start date. You may be asked to participate in employee orientation or a training session before starting the job.

- **Ask for time to consider the offer.** This is the time to bring up any unanswered questions that might affect your decision. Let the employer know when you will notify him or her of your decision. Do not put off responding to the employer.

- **Turn down the job offer.** You may decide that the job is not right for you, or you may have been offered a better job in the meantime. Whatever the case, if you do not plan to take the position, say so. You do not need to give reasons for turning down a job offer. Simply say, “Thank you for considering me, but I am not interested in taking the position.”

If you are not offered a job, do not be discouraged. You may not have the necessary qualifications or the employer may have found an applicant more suited to the position. The interviewer is under no obligation to tell you why you are not being offered the job. Accept the decision gracefully, and keep looking for a job.

**First Day**

When you start a new job, you want to do well. **What should you do to prepare for your first day in a new position?**
On the Job

Whether you work for a large company or a small business, what really matters to your professional success is the relationship between you and your employer. In this relationship, both parties have rights and responsibilities. When you begin your job, your employer will explain to you specific expectations and regulations. In accepting the job, you agree to these responsibilities.

Employee Responsibilities

As an employee, your main responsibility, or required task or duty, is to do the very best job possible for your employer and for the children in your care. In most cases, your responsibilities to your employer are the employer’s rights in the relationship. Successful employees do more than just show up for the job. They are proactive and involved in their work. In addition, they have the exact skills needed to do their jobs well. Here are some general ways to carry out your responsibilities:

▲ Earn your pay. Complete each task you are assigned on time. Keep your work area neat and well organized. Sometimes going the “extra mile” with your work leads to greater success.

▲ Use time responsibly. Be on time for work. Return promptly from breaks and meals. Use time effectively by planning how to complete tasks efficiently. You must also learn to prioritize, or put tasks in the order of importance, not in the order of your preference. You may need to ask your supervisor to help you prioritize your assigned tasks, especially if you have been told to do more in your workday than is humanly possible.

▲ Show You Care

Employers expect employees to do their job well and demonstrate responsibility, professionalism, and honesty. Why are these qualities important in a child care occupation?
Respect the rules. Learn and follow your employer's rules and policies, typically spelled out in an employee handbook. If you are unsure about a policy, ask your employer, and if necessary, ask if it is available in writing.

Work safely. Familiarize yourself with your job’s safety requirements. Learn how to operate and maintain equipment safely. Ask your supervisor to observe you to ensure that you have learned properly. Report any damaged equipment or unsafe conditions or practices to your supervisor immediately.

Maintain confidentiality. When you work with children, much of the information you gain about individuals may be private and personal. It is up to you to respect the rights of the children you care for and to maintain confidentiality about their personal information.

Internet Safety
The Internet is a great resource for information, education, networking, shopping, and entertainment. However, you must be careful. Never save private information such as passwords or credit card information on a public computer. Think before you post personal information to a social networking site. Future and current employers may review this information and use it to make decisions about hiring you. Make sure your Internet connection is secured behind a firewall to prevent hackers from accessing your system.

What Would You Do? You log onto a shared computer in your break room and find that one of your coworkers was using the computer for online shopping. The computer saved her password and credit card information. What would you do?

A responsible employee also uses job resources wisely. In addition to time, your resources include people, information, technology, and money.

People. Child care professionals have constant interaction with people. You must take care to respect and communicate with children, parents, and coworkers effectively. Building positive relationships with parents and coworkers benefits the children in your care.

Information. Effective care professionals share important information they acquire. The whole team benefits from shared knowledge. They also recognize the difference between sharing useful job information and negative information, such as gossip.

Technology. Respect technology resources on the job and remember to use it for business purposes only. Personal e-mail, online shopping, and computer games are inappropriate uses of employer-owned computers and a waste of your employer’s time.

Money. Whenever you perform a job transaction that involves money, double-check yourself and be honest. If you are responsible for making purchases, look for good values when you spend the program’s budget.

In addition to the above responsibilities, success as an employee depends upon willingness to work as a team, show a positive attitude and respect, and resolve conflicts effectively.
Teamwork

As a child care teacher, you will often find yourself part of a large care team. Every worker is an individual with his or her own personality traits, strengths, and weaknesses. A team, however, is more than a set of individuals. In order to bring individuals together into an effective team, each employee must practice good teamwork.

If you have ever played a team sport or served on a committee, you know how important it is that every member participates and completes his or her assignment. You will practice teamwork on the job by completing your duties, and in doing so, you are supporting the efforts of your coworkers. As you build and maintain relationships at work, you are investing in your career and the people with whom you work, as well as those in your care. You must get along to work well together.

Positive Attitude

An upbeat, positive outlook contributes to team spirit. Complaining can bring down the whole team and affect your job performance. A positive attitude, along with carefully thought-out responses, leads to effectiveness in the workplace and your personal life. Look beyond your personal views and understand the reality of a situation before you respond.

Respect

When you respect and appreciate the differences in people, you will be more likely to have good work relationships. You demonstrate self-respect when you accept responsibility for your actions and learn from your mistakes. Learn to practice empathy (ˈem-pə-thē), the ability to put yourself in another’s place. Empathy will help you understand the feelings of your coworkers and children in your care.

Resolving Conflicts

No matter how well you and your coworkers get along, you will not always agree. Disputes and conflicts are a common part of team interaction. Use your negotiation and compromise skills to lead the way to effective problem solving. While conflict can be unpleasant, remember to focus on the problem, not the personalities involved.
**Ethics**

Ethics (‘e-thiks) are your internal guidelines for distinguishing right from wrong. Ethical behavior consists of doing what is right. Some choices, however, are more difficult. When two choices appear equally right or equally wrong, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the choice comply with the law?
- Is the choice fair to those involved?
- Does the choice harm anyone?
- Has the choice been communicated honestly?
- Can I live with the choice without guilt?

Behaving ethically also means taking responsibility. If you make a mistake, admit it. Responsible employees learn from their mistakes and adapt their behavior to make better choices in the future.

**Wages and Benefits**

When you agree to take a job, you trade your skills and services for money. Your employer sets your pay based on your level of skills and experience, the difficulty of the work, and the number of people competing for the same job. Search on the Internet to find examples of pay for the same job in your region. This will give you a market value of the position so you know whether the pay rate you are offered is fair. More information is also available from organizations that advocate for improved child care worker compensation.

Pay periods differ. Some employers pay weekly, every two weeks, or once a month. Your employer will pay you in one of two ways. If you are paid an hourly wage, your employer will pay you a certain amount for each hour you work. Your pay will vary depending on how many hours you work each pay period. If you receive a salary, you will be paid a set amount of money each pay period, regardless of the number of hours you work.

In addition to your salary, your employer may offer benefits. Benefits are considered part of the total compensation package. A generous benefits package can make up for a lower wage. Likewise, a higher wage may make up for few benefits. Benefits an employer may offer include:

- Paid vacation and sick days
- Health, life, dental, and accident insurance
- Disability insurance that helps pay your expenses if you become disabled and cannot work
- Savings and investment plans, such as a 401K plan, to help you earn money for retirement
- Tuition reimbursement for education courses that are related to your career
- Onsite child care
The total amount of money you earn is your gross pay. If you are paid an hourly wage, calculate your gross pay by multiplying the number of hours worked by your hourly wage. The amount of money you receive after deductions are taken out is called your net pay, or take-home pay. Deductions are amounts of money withheld from your gross pay for taxes, insurance, and other fees. Figure 2.5 describes some common deductions. You can ask your employer to explain the specific deductions that will be taken out of your pay.

**Figure 2.5 Paycheck Deductions**

**Net Pay** Your pay stub provides important information about your earnings and deductions. How much were this employee’s total deductions?

---

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<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>HOURS</th>
<th>GROSS PAY</th>
<th>YEAR TO DATE</th>
<th>DEDUCTIONS</th>
<th>DEDUCTION</th>
<th>YEAR TO DATE</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>GROSS PAY</th>
<th>TAXES</th>
<th>DEDUCTIONS</th>
<th>NET PAY</th>
<th>END</th>
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<td>23076186</td>
<td>324.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                   | 2280.05   | 239.82 | 99.00      | 1941.23 |     |           |              |                 |

**FICA**
Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) deductions are social security taxes on the money you earn. Social security taxes are withheld in two parts. The first part goes toward pension benefits. The second part covers Medicare benefits.

**State Income Tax**
A personal income tax you pay on the amount of income you receive. The amount of state income tax varies by state. Some states do not have an income tax.

**Federal Income Tax**
A personal income tax you pay on the amount of income you receive. This is the main source of revenue for the federal government.

**Gross Pay**
The total amount of your earnings before taxes and other deductions.

**Net Pay**
Your take-home pay, or the amount of your earnings after all deductions are taken out.

**Other Deductions**
Other withholdings that are taken out of your paycheck might include employee contributions to medical, dental, or life insurance or retirement savings.
Employer Responsibilities

The employer-employee relationship works both ways. Your employer has responsibilities to you, too. Your employer’s main responsibilities include supplying you with what you need to do your job, providing safe working conditions, and making sure you are treated fairly. In most cases, your employer's responsibilities to you are your rights in the relationship.

Employee Support

Your employer will outline your responsibilities and expectations clearly. Your employer is responsible for providing you with all the equipment or training you need to do your job well. You and your employer may not agree on what are necessities. If you find that you lack what you need, ask your supervisor to show you how to do an assigned task with the available resources.

Safe Working Conditions

Federal, state, and local regulations require your employer to provide you with safe working conditions. This responsibility includes the following:

- Providing equipment and materials necessary to do the job safely
- Eliminating any recognized health and safety hazards
- Informing employees when conditions or materials pose dangers to health and safety
- Maintaining records of job-related illnesses and injuries
Complying with environmental-protection policies for safely disposing of waste materials

Providing conditions or equipment known to prevent injury

If you are injured on the job and cannot work, state laws require your employer to provide financial help called workers’ compensation to cover medical expenses and lost wages. Employers with fewer than four employees do not have to carry this type of insurance. If your employer does not, you might consider buying your own personal disability insurance.

Fair Labor Practices

Your employer has a legal responsibility to protect you from unfair treatment on the job. U.S. labor laws are meant to protect the following rights of employees:

- To have an equal opportunity to obtain and keep employment
- To be paid a fair wage
- To be considered fairly for promotion

Among other legally required responsibilities, employers must pay their employees at least the federal minimum wage, the lowest hourly amount a worker can earn. Some locations pay entry-level employees a wage higher than the federal government requires. Employers must compensate hourly employees who work overtime (more than 40 hours per week) with extra pay or time off, called compensatory time.

U.S. workers are guaranteed the right to join a labor union, an organization of workers in a similar field. Leaders of labor unions act as the voice of their members in collective bargaining, the process of workers and employers agreeing to working conditions, contracts, and benefits. Labor unions represent about 15 percent of U.S. workers. Some labor unions include child care teachers and aides.

Employers must protect their employees from discrimination—unfair treatment based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, disability, or other factors. For example, sexual harassment is an act of discrimination. It is any unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature. It is illegal behavior in the workplace. If you think someone has sexually harassed you, report the incident to your supervisor immediately so the employer can investigate the matter and take action.

Performance Evaluations

Your employer is also responsible for giving you feedback on your job performance. Some employers consider an employee’s first few months on a new job as a probation period. Probation is a period in which an employer observes the employee’s work and behavior in order to assess whether the employee is fit to remain with the company.

Expert Advice . . .

“Besides formal training you must have energy and enthusiasm to work successfully with children.”

— Marjorie Eberts and Margaret Gisler, Careers for Kids at Heart and Others Who Adore Children
Your employee handbook should include details about how often the employer conducts performance evaluations. Your employee handbook will also identify what your employer looks for during a performance evaluation and the procedure an employee should follow in responding to the evaluation. During a performance evaluation, an employer may examine such things as the employee’s

- job knowledge and how the employee applies that knowledge.
- willingness to work cooperatively as a team member.
- ability to communicate effectively on the job.
- positive attitude and workplace ethic.

Performance evaluations are a good opportunity to take a look at your short- and long-term career goals. You can talk about your progress toward your career goals and advancement opportunities with your employer at this meeting.

**Advancing on the Job**

Advancement opportunities in early childhood care vary. Advancement may involve a promotion. It also can be at the same job level but with more responsibilities at a higher rate of pay. Advancement may also involve leaving for a better job elsewhere or beginning your own business. Some qualities that will help you advance in your career include:
Show initiative. The willingness to take on new tasks and levels of responsibility shows initiative. Workers with initiative do not wait to be told what to do next.

Show desire to learn. Continuing your education or training through formal classes, workshops, or independent study shows a desire to learn.

Find a mentor. A mentor could be your supervisor, an experienced coworker, or a retired early childhood professional. A mentor can share his or her experiences with you, answer questions, and give advice on how to progress towards your long-term career goals.

Terminating Employment

Depending on your career goals, there may come a time in the future in which you want to change careers or jobs. When considering a job change, keep the following points in mind:

- Keep your job search to yourself until you have a new job. You do not want to make your work situation difficult with your current employer while you search for a new job.
- Research and list the jobs or careers in which you are interested. Analyze each in regard to your skills, experience, and career goals.
- Set up interviews at times that you will not miss work. If necessary, use vacation time.
- After finding a new job, be sure to give notice to your employer that you are terminating your employment. Check your employee handbook to find out how much notice you must give your employer.
- Until you leave your place of employment, work just as hard as you always have. You want to leave a good impression. How you perform during your last few weeks of work is what people will remember about you.

Reading Check

Contrast How does a salary differ from an hourly wage?
Continuing Your Education

Is College My Best Option?
This is a very important question that every high school student will ask himself or herself. There is no right answer, but it is a decision that can affect the rest of your life. It is important that you educate yourself before making the decision and give it the serious thought it deserves.

Does college guarantee success?
Having a college degree opens many doors. There are many people who find success and happiness without a degree. However, it is more important to keep in mind that more and more employers want to hire applicants with degrees. You can find work without a degree, but more options are available when you have a degree.

What can I learn if I continue my education?
In college, students read books, have discussions with other students, learn new skills, and learn from experts in their fields. Their experiences encourage students to think, ask questions, explore new ideas, and further develop academically. Students will expand their knowledge and skills, learn how to express themselves more clearly, and increase their understanding of local, national, and global issues.

What are some benefits of going to college?
Going to college creates opportunities. College graduates have an edge in the job market over those who have not experienced higher education. Additionally, a student who attends college usually earns more than a person who does not. According to a recent U.S. Census Bureau finding, a person with a bachelor’s degree or higher earned approximately 50 percent more on average than a person with only a high school diploma.

Hands-On

College Readiness Create a list of pros and cons for continuing your education after high school. Think about the long term as well as the short term. Consider all the possibilities, such as community college, vocational school, or a four-year college or university. Go over the list with your parents or guardians, and ask a guidance counselor for his or her input.

Path to Success

Identify Your Goals When considering a college degree, think about what you want out of life and whether or not a degree will help you achieve it.

Explore Your Options Consider community college, trade and technical schools, four-year schools, and distance learning.

Seek Guidance Part of your school guidance counselor’s job is to help you with decisions like this.

Think Long-Term Try to think about not only what you want your life to be like next year but what you want it to be like in 20 years.

Be Confident Worrying that college or continuing your education in other ways might be too difficult should not be a factor in your decision.
Employability Skills

Visual Summary

Employability Skills for an Early Childhood Professional

Basic communication, math, thinking, and information skills are very important.

A strong work ethic shows a personal commitment to do the best job possible.

Employers look for employees with leadership potential, people who will motivate others to accomplish goals.

Taking initiative and seeking additional training or education will lead to career advancement opportunities.

Vocabulary Review

1. Write a paragraph using five or more content and academic vocabulary terms.

Content Vocabulary

- active listening (p. 22)
- body language (p. 23)
- work ethic (p. 25)
- flexibility (p. 25)
- networking (p. 28)
- trade publications (p. 29)
- service learning (p. 30)
- résumé (p. 33)
- prioritize (p. 39)
- empathy (p. 41)
- ethics (p. 42)
- workers’ compensation (p. 45)
- minimum wage (p. 45)
- compensatory time (p. 45)
- labor union (p. 45)

Academic Vocabulary

- foundation (p. 22)
- discrimination (p. 45)
- sexual harassment (p. 45)
- probation (p. 45)
- collective bargaining (p. 45)
- responsibility (p. 39)

Review Key Concepts

2. Describe the basic employability skills that applicants need for positions in early childhood care.

3. List the qualities of effective leaders.

4. Outline the steps of the job application and hiring process and the required actions at each step.

5. Summarize the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers.
CHAPTER 2 • Review and Applications

Critical Thinking
6. **Give examples** of how communication skills are used in a child care setting.
7. **Apply** leadership skills to a child care setting. Write a scenario in which a child care worker demonstrates leadership.
8. **Predict** the potential benefits of professional development activities, including networking with other early childhood professionals, joining professional organizations, and reading trade publications. Is it possible to be truly professional without engaging in such activities? Why or why not?
9. **Explain** why networking is one of the most successful resources in searching for a job.
10. **Analyze** your personal behavior in terms of work ethic and leadership. What can you do to develop these skills while still in school?

21st Century Skills

Leadership Skills
11. **Leadership Styles** There are four styles of leadership: authoritarian, democratic, integrated, and laissez-faire. Use print and Internet resources to learn more about each of these styles. Write a paragraph that describes which leadership style most closely matches yours and how you can effectively utilize your style or a combination of styles in a teamwork situation.

Critical Thinking Skills
12. **Problem-Solving From Experience** Talk to a trusted adult such as a parent or teacher about a problem he or she encountered in the workplace. Ask the adult to describe the problem and how it was resolved. Consider how you would have acted if you were faced with the same situation. In what other ways could the problem have been solved?

Child Care LAB

Practice Teamwork
13. **Use Teamwork to Solve a Problem** In this activity, you will work in a team of five students to solve a scenario-based problem and to analyze teamwork.

   A. **Review the scenario.** Your team are staff at a local child care center. The center director has set aside $200 from the budget for the staff to decide how to spend. The money can be spent on anything, such as new technology for the centers or lunch out for the staff.

   B. **Assign team roles.** Designate a discussion leader, a note taker, and a spokesperson for the team. The discussion leader should lead the group’s discussion and ensure that everyone is able to share his or her opinion. The note taker should keep a running list of the team’s ideas. The spokesperson will present your team’s decision to the class.

   C. **Use teamwork to solve the problem.** Work with your team to make a group decision about how to spend the $200. While working with the team, observe how your team members demonstrate teamwork.

   D. **Share your decision.** Have your the team spokesperson share how your team decided to spend the money to the class.

   E. **Analyze your group’s teamwork.** Write a brief report that summarizes your observations on the teamwork experience. Include what your team did well and what teamwork skills could be improved.

Use the skills you have learned in this chapter.

Create Your Evaluation
Create an evaluation sheet with these categories:
• Working with Others
• Focus on Task
• Attitude
• Contribution
• Problem Solving
• Leadership
Self-assess your performance in each area and evaluate it on an Always/Sometimes/Rarely/Never scale.

50 Unit 1 Exploring Career Opportunities
14. **Interview Dialogues** With a partner, write two different dialogues between an interviewer and a job candidate. The first dialogue should show the candidate using poor interviewing techniques and skills. The second should show the candidate using good techniques. Role-play your dialogues for the class.

15. **Professional Organizations** Professional organizations are a community of people committed to a common cause or interest. Select a professional organization associated with child care from the list in Figure 2.2 on page 29. Access its Web site and research its mission and requirements to become a member. Write a paragraph analyzing the organization's benefit to an individual member and to the community it represents based on its activities and publications.

16. **Workplace Comfort** Ergonomics is the study of the work environment for comfort and efficiency. It is an employer’s responsibility to minimize the risk of employee injury on the job. They can do this by providing an ergonomic environment, from lighting to chairs and computer equipment. If you are working with a computer, improper placement of the monitor can cause strain on your neck and eyes.

**Procedure** Place a monitor so that you have to look up to see it and type for five minutes. Lower the monitor so that you can look straight ahead and type for five minutes. Raise your chair or lower the monitor even farther so that you must look down to see it and type for five more minutes. Note how your neck and eyes feel after each placement of the monitor.

**Analysis** Which position places the least amount of strain on your neck? Review your results and write a statement that explains your conclusion.

---

**Certification Prep**

**Directions** Read each statement. Then read the answer choices and select the best answer.

17. Proper interview behavior includes __________.
   - A. asking questions about job responsibilities
   - B. avoiding eye contact
   - C. wearing casual clothes
   - D. chewing gum

18. The amount of earnings after deductions is called __________.
   - A. taxes
   - B. gross pay
   - C. net pay
   - D. salary

---

**Sharpen your test-taking skills to improve your certification program score.**

**Test-Taking Tip**

When taking a multiple-choice test, glance over the test before starting. See how many total questions there are so that you can figure out how much time you have to answer each question.