

# GET THE JOB

## Returning to Work

### Practical Steps for a Smooth Return After Time Away

A pause in paid work can happen for many reasons: raising children, caring for a relative, managing health or returning after retirement. When it is time to come back, the process often starts with a simple question: What has changed, and how do I show I am ready?

The good news is that the U.S. job market continues to reward skills, reliability and a willingness to learn. Federal data show the workforce has grown more diverse in age over time, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting the labor force participation rate for people 65 and older will continue rising through 2032, reflecting longer careers and more later-life transitions.

Career breaks are common, and they do not have to define a candidate. In many fields, employers are looking for steady attendance, clear communication and comfort with the basics of today's workplace, including email, video meetings and common office software.

#### UPDATING YOUR STORY

Start by taking inventory of what you did during the time away. Caregiving, volunteer



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work, managing a household budget or coordinating appointments can translate into scheduling, recordkeeping, conflict resolution and teamwork. Those are real workplace skills when described clearly.

A modern resume also helps. Many career counselors encourage focusing on the last 10 to 15 years of experience, highlighting relevant roles and training rather than listing every older job. If a gap needs explanation, keep it brief and move quickly to what you can

do now.

LinkedIn and other professional profiles are often a first stop for hiring managers. A simple update, including current interests, a short summary and recent coursework, can help signal readiness without oversharing personal details.

#### SKILLS THAT MATTER

Training does not have to mean a new degree. Community colleges, public libraries and workforce development programs often offer

short courses in computer basics, bookkeeping, health care support roles and other practical areas tied to local hiring needs.

For those returning to office settings, comfort with Microsoft Office or Google Workspace is useful. In many industries, familiarity with scheduling platforms and customer relationship tools can also help. Employers generally value candidates who can demonstrate recent learning, whether through a certificate, a class or a volunteer role

using current technology.

Interview preparation is another key step. Practice a concise explanation for the break, then pivot to strengths and current goals. Hiring managers often respond well to candidates who show they are organized, dependable and motivated to contribute.

#### FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Not every return has to start with a full-time job. Part-time roles, temporary assignments and contract work can provide current references and a recent work history. The BLS reports that millions of Americans work part time, and many use it as a bridge to longer-term roles.

Networking still matters, and it does not have to be formal. Reconnecting with former colleagues, attending local job fairs or talking with neighbors about openings can uncover leads before they are widely posted.

Coming back to work is a personal transition, but it is also a practical one. With a clear resume, updated skills and a plan for the first step, returning workers can approach the job search with steadiness and confidence.