

Part-Time Work

by Christina Bruni

Part-time work might be more your speed if for some reason you're unable to work at a full-time job. You might simply want to hang onto your SSI or SSDI and supplant the government check with extra money. Also, maybe certain positions would be too stressful for you. A part-time job could be easier to manage.

Along with applying in person to local stores you can log on to <https://www.snagajob.com> or <https://www.groovejob.com> to look for employment geared to retail and food service. You can also use <https://www.workinretail.com> for retail jobs.

One of the best ways to find a job might be through good old-fashioned word-of-mouth. Ask people you know if they know of any job openings in the area. A fancy word for this is networking. Often, it's not what you know it's who you know that lands you a job. It helps to have numerous eyes and ears scouting on your behalf at the places they frequent.

Job Hunt ABCs

Some ideas about how to look for part-time work in a mall or shopping center: Dress in neat and clean clothes and shoes, not jeans and sneakers. Turn off your cell phone so that if you're speaking to a store manager it won't ring.

Long before you enter the premises, remove your headphones if you're listening to an iPod or MP3 player. Better yet, leave the electronic gear at home if you're serious about searching for a job. Make looking for work your number-one focus.

Understand that all the staff at the establishment will be judging you as soon as you enter. Be pleasant and smile when it's appropriate. You might think the only one you need to impress is your future boss. Yet if you come across as sullen or disrespectful to the support staff, they will give their opinion to the hiring manager.

Ask to speak to the manager. When they come out ask if you can fill out an application for a job and whether they are hiring. Any time you fill out an application it's perfectly okay to return to the store in a week or so if you haven't heard back. You might get interviewed right on the spot which is why you need to dress well.

While you are there refrain from buying anything. Your purpose is to secure a job. It will look good if you are a loyal customer of the store or know something about the products or services it offers. For example, if you're a fashion buff you might apply to a clothes store.

On-the-Job Pointers

Once on the job remember that the client is royalty. Be courteous and be polite even if the customer is rude to you. Arguing with them is a no-win situation. It's not your job to prove you're right. Your goal is to keep them coming in the doors and walking out with full shopping

bags. Use your judgment if you have leeway in granting their requests. If you don't have decision-making authority refer them to your manager.

Your boss wants to know that you will do the job right the first time without having to be told to do it. The manager knows who's working and who's shirking. It makes sense for you to always keep busy or you might be shown the door too. Focus on your own job not on what your coworkers are doing or not doing.

It might sound corny however "service with a smile" is what it's all about. Any honest job labored at with pride can give you dignity. Working at a job is a good way to feel productive. A minimum-wage job is a vital strand in the economic web of our country. Those of you working in these jobs should be celebrated.

You might feel you're "*Just a _____*" (fill in the blank with your job title). However, what you do is important. You might not always get recognition for your efforts. Yet you can be pleased with the satisfaction of a job well done.

One rule of thumb for any part-time work is that when you take your breaks return to work on time not later than you're supposed to. Always ask questions if you need clarification on procedures. Be ethical in your dealings with your coworkers and the customers.

As with an office job, be punctual, cheerful, and focused on getting the work done. You represent the company so the image of how you present yourself speaks volumes.

Retail work can be a good fit if you want flexible hours to go see your psychiatrist or therapist. In this regard you might be able to work evenings and weekends. You might get a day off during the week or time off during the day. Managers also are sometimes able to work around your schedule if you're attending school.

The same rules apply here as to disclosure at a full-time job. It's recommended you do not disclose your diagnosis unless you need a modification to your job. See the chapter on Requesting a Reasonable Accommodation where I go into this in detail.

Work History

It also makes sense to stay at your job for the long-term and not job hop. Remain in place unless the situation where you work is unlivable. You deserve respect. Your boss should not treat you like a pile of dog poop. If you feel you're being harassed, you might have to find another job.

Stay at this job while you're looking for a new job. It's always easier to find a new job when you're employed. If you quit and start to have a noticeable gap in employment, it's harder to get hired again at another job. This happens to teenagers and young adults working in shoe stores as well as staff typing away at a cubicle in an office.

Relax—you can have fun on your job even if it's hard work. Part-time jobs often have perks like employee discounts or free food. If you work in a store in a mall you might get a discount at any store in the mall. Do ask about this feature once you start working there.

Insider Secrets

For over twenty years I've worked at my primary job. Since the start I've supervised volunteers. For three years, I supervised paid interns. The volunteers and interns are mostly younger and older teens. It's the first real job for a lot of them. I want to talk about developing a strong work ethic because I've had experience with all kinds of employees.

First, you do not get paid for "showing up." You only get paid when you do the work that is required of you. It does not go well if you do not do that work. It's worse if you goof off or are lazy. You can be "laid off" for any reason in most states. You can be "fired" for just cause like stealing or doing something else unethical.

Over the years, I've had to terminate volunteers (yes, people who weren't paid) that lacked a hard work ethic. In fact, they either refused to do the work at all or messed up the work they were supposed to do.

Supervisors, support staff, and everyone you meet at your job, whether fellow employees or customers, are immediately aware of your work ethic. I would not be lying if I told you that on your first day at the job, the supervisor has formed an impression of your work ethic within ten minutes of meeting you. It can be as simple as noticing which employee says "please" and "thank you" as a common courtesy and which employee remains silent.

Next-Level Approach

As with any job, you should ask your supervisor if there's anything else you can do at your part-time job when you've finished what you were supposed to do. Better yet, figure out for yourself things you can do to improve your employer's business.

Do take initiative this way in addition to asking your supervisor what you can do. Make sure you tell your supervisor about the things you've done on your own so that you can get credit for them.

Act like what's called a "motivated self-starter" even if you're only a part-time worker. Take initiative to start, follow through on, and complete your tasks on your own. A supervisor should not need to "micro-manage" or constantly check up on their direct reports to make sure a person is doing the job right.

You're there to make your boss's job easier. In doing so you will make this person look good. The bottom line is earning money for the business. Keeping the customers happy to return to your store.

You might not see the benefit in always working harder and longer when coworkers slack off. They might not put in the same effort. The bottom line is that you don't know when you might have to change jobs and get a recommendation. Thus, you must be scrupulous in your dealings with others at work.

Different Job Beats

My first job in college was as a cashier in McDonald's. For thirteen months I wore a brown polyester uniform. Yes, a brown polyester uniform. For some of you this kind of job could be great.

If you want to work outside of fast food and retail, research novel options. Play detective to track down leads for other jobs. Shelving books at a library might be possible, for instance.

You shouldn't turn down the possibility of starting out doing volunteer work to get experience. See the chapter on *The Number-One Secret to Getting a Job* where I go into detail about volunteer work.

For teens and young adults twenty-five and younger or loosely in that age range, your local library will sometimes have in its education and job section, or on its regular shelves if no separate section exists, books about jobs geared to young people.

Yes—you can and should go to your local library and talk with a librarian about resources for finding different kinds of jobs. If your local branch offers a limited selection of books, find out if the library system has a business and career center at its main branch. It's worth a trip there to do this kind of research.

Always tell the librarians "please" and "thank you" when you ask for their help. You might consider working at a library as a clerk, alongside professional librarians. Clerks don't need a college degree. Or if you're a computer whiz, a lot of public libraries are hiring technology resource support staff.

Jobs like babysitting, or walking dogs, or housecleaning, might be the way to go for some of you. Tutoring kids in homework might be an option if you scored high on standardized tests or got great grades in high school. Mowing lawns, watering gardens, and doing landscaping work, are jobs that might be a good fit for others.

Jobs exist in local parks and community centers too. Filing, faxing, photocopying documents, and running errands for the staff of a small local business might be more your style. The point is numerous part-time jobs exist.

Real-Life Customer Service

America is a capitalist society. Businesses of all stripes make our country run. That's the great thing because anyone with ambition can open a store and make money. Here the free market is open to all.

Excellent customer service deserves to be rewarded. Here's what to avoid in terms of customer service so that you're not booted out of a job because you fail to make money for your employer. Companies are in business to make money. They want you to serve everyone who walks through the doors, regardless of color, creed, or appearance, or sexual preference, with courtesy.

Be proactive in assessing what you can do to get the customers to part with their cash. Remember these two sales dictums: "Don't try to sell the customer a blue shirt if all they want is a white one." "Sell the benefit, not the feature." Find out what each customer needs and how the product can fill their need and sell it to them.

Good Manners

Lest you think some people are naturally effervescent and not everyone is, I'll end with this parting truth. You can become better at customer service by practicing how you interact with

others. Courtesy should be a basic human right that people give to each other and receive. In the business world, having good manners makes good sense.

This chapter ends with the number-one secret: *decide* how you want to act. Acting professional even though you have a part-time job will open doors. A manager job might open, would you like to be considered for it? Your work ethic can open doors for you.

Checklist for Job Application Information

- ✓ Your name, address, telephone number(s), e-mail, and social security number.
- ✓ Names, location, dates, course of study, and diploma or degree of schools (or GED) and date completed.
- ✓ Paid work employer names, addresses, job titles, dates worked from and to, supervisor name, telephone numbers, job functions, and reason for leaving.
- ✓ Volunteer work employer names, addresses, job titles, dates worked from and to, supervisor name, telephone numbers, job functions, and reason for leaving.
- ✓ References (Three each listing name, their address, relationship to you, and telephone numbers.).
- ✓ Awards or Honors (Employee of the Month, Volunteer of the Year, any customer recommendation, etc.).
- ✓ Certifications (Food handling and safety, CPR/First Aid, etc.).
- ✓ Other skills (Cash register, Heimlich maneuver, computers, etc.).
- ✓ Languages (speak/read/write.).
- ✓ Military service type and dates of service.
- ✓ Hours available to work.