



Online Job Search Guide™: 15 Critical Criteria for Choosing the Best Job Site for You!

There are hundreds of thousands of Web job sites, and many are not very good.

An upfront investment of time evaluating sites before you register with them will pay big dividends over the long term. You'll spend less time, later, if you've chosen well in the beginning. You'll also receive fewer junk e-mails, and your resume won't come back to haunt you later (when an angry boss finds your resume on a job board or receives your resume in an e-mail from a recruiter or from an e-mailed resume distribution service).

1. Does the site charge you for access to job opportunities?

Very rarely should a job seeker pay for access to open jobs, online or offline. In general, if there is a charge to the job seeker, find another site.

Some job sites for "executives" do charge a fee, but look for some written guarantees of the quality (and exclusivity) of the opportunities and recent references from satisfied clients before you pay their fee. The only other online exceptions that seem legitimate are the Web sites of associations and societies. These sites may provide job opportunities (or resume posting) only for members. In that case, you may want to join, if you are interested in the association anyway.

(See the RileyGuide.com section on "[Scams & Schemes in Work and Employment Services](http://www.rileyguide.com/scams.html)" at <http://www.rileyguide.com/scams.html> for more information.)

2. Do you have to register a profile or resume before you can search through the jobs?

Be suspicious of a site that won't let you perform a job search *before* you register your profile or resume. You need to evaluate the site, first, to determine if it has the jobs you want before you register. This should be a BIG red flag that the site is not seriously interested in helping you find a job, particularly if the site does not have a Privacy Policy posted telling you what they do with your information.

Find another site -- thousands of Web job sites are available that allow you to try before you join.

When you do find a site where you want to register your profile, provide the least amount of contact information that you can (see # 11 below).

3. Is the site easy to use?

You should be able to easily find a way to search for the jobs you want -- specifying the location and the type of job (by keyword or some other method of choosing). When you've found a job you like, it should be easy for you to apply for it. If you

want to post your resume, that should be an easy process, too. And there should be easy-to-follow directions in case you get lost or confused.

If you feel inept or uncomfortable using a site, don't use it, no matter how "famous" or highly recommended it is. If you have worked with it for a reasonable amount of time (more than 5 minutes but less than 2 hours) and you don't understand it or get what you want from it, you and the site may just not have "good chemistry," and you won't go be able to leverage its capabilities. So, don't waste your time. Move on to one that is easy for you to use.

4. Does the site work properly (e.g., job search capability, etc.)

If you search for jobs located in Chicago, Illinois, the site should provide you with jobs in the Chicago area, if it has any. Some large employers have jobs open in many locations, so you may get a few jobs in your search results that don't appear, at first glance, to be specifically in the geography you want. However, closer examination should show them to fit your criteria. Most of the search results should be what you expect.

If the results don't match what you have requested, check for hints or help, and read them before you try again. Typically, on a search engine or other search site, your first and, sometimes, your second and third searches, too, just help you understand better how to use the search capability so that you can get what you want. If you still don't get what you want after 4 or 5 tries, then either the site does not have the jobs you want, or the search function doesn't work properly (yes, that happens!). So, time to move on.

5. Does the site have the jobs you want -- the "right" industry, profession, employer, and location for you?

If you are looking for an electrical engineering job in Florida with a company working on NASA projects, a job site for sales jobs in Oregon won't do you much good.

The name of the site may give you a clue about its relevance to your job search (e.g., BostonJobs.com), but you might not really know for sure until you poke around in the site. Try searching for the job you want, and see what you find. The job search capability should enable you to fine tune your search so that the results are appropriate and useful.

Typically sites offer the ability to search for jobs by location, and they don't usually list a location unless they have at least 1 position available there (although there are exceptions!). So, check to see if the location you want is listed or if you can find jobs in that general area.

Many sites offer the capability to search through their employer listings or to search for a position by employer. If you have targeted an employer (a GREAT idea!), check to see if the site has opportunities from that employer or the employer's competitors, if you know who they are.

If they don't have the jobs you want, move on. Don't waste your time and risk your privacy by posting your resume and hoping some appropriate jobs appear at some later date.

6. Are the jobs "fresh" or old?

Do a search, or browse through the listings if you can. Do the jobs have posting dates associated with them? Have jobs been posted recently? Be a little suspicious if the jobs are undated or if all the jobs were posted "today." Certainly, a job posted last week, last month, or even last quarter, may still be open, and may be just the right job for you. However, in general, you should see jobs with a wide range of dates, and, depending on the size of the site, several jobs opened each week day.

If posting dates aren't obvious, check the "Employers" section of the site. Frequently, the pricing section will explain how long a job posting will remain active. Job postings are usually purchased for 30 or 60 days, sometimes longer, so that's usually the oldest age of any job posting you should see.

On a large site, if you don't see any jobs posted within the most recent 10 days, find another site. Specialized sites that serve small populations of employers and job seekers, like mid wives, for example, may not have a high volume of job postings because there is not a high volume of available jobs, so do not expect to see new jobs posted on a daily, or even weekly, basis. They are the exception to the 10-day rule.

7. Does the site have a comprehensive, job hunter-friendly Privacy Policy?

Look for a Privacy Policy, and READ IT before your register at a job site!! The privacy policy should disclose to you the information that the site collects and what they do with it (i.e., sell or rent your e-mail address, etc.). Pay particular attention to what happens to your resume!

Print and save a copy of the site's Privacy Policy when you register at a site (on that day and at that time).

Some alleged job sites seem to exist only to collect your contact information (e-mail address, home address, phone number, etc.) so that they can sell the information to companies that will bombard you with advertising. You provide a lot of very personal information to job sites, and you need to know how it will be used.

Do not assume that a TRUSTe, BBBonline, or other "privacy seal" program ensures that your privacy is protected. Those seals only indicate that the site has agreed to be audited in their compliance with their posted policy (are they doing what they said that they would do, even if they said that they would sell your e-mail address to anyone with the money to buy it)!

The privacy seals are not a measure of the "quality" of that policy, at most, they are only a measure of the compliance! And every Privacy Policy begins with a grand statement of the site's commitment to protecting your privacy. It's what contained in

the paragraphs *following* that reassuring opening statement that matter.

If there isn't a Privacy Policy posted for you to read, find another site. If you don't like the Privacy Policy, find another site. There are thousands to choose from.

(See the [Job-Hunt.org](http://www.job-hunt.org/privacy.shtml) section on [Protecting Your Privacy](http://www.job-hunt.org/privacy.shtml) at <http://www.job-hunt.org/privacy.shtml> for more tips on reading and evaluating privacy policies.)

8. Are most of the jobs posted by employers or agencies acting on behalf of employers?

In general, jobs posted directly by an employer are preferable because you will be dealing directly with the people who can hire you. Additionally, if an agency sends your resume to an employer, you may be at a competitive disadvantage in comparison with a direct applicant. The applicant who is provided by an agency will cost the employer more to hire (because of the fee paid to the agency to find the applicant) than an applicant who comes to the employer directly, even if the salary is exactly the same for both. So, all things being equal, the direct applicant will more likely be hired than the agency applicant.

Of course, it's not always possible to work directly with the employer because some employers want anonymity for competitive reasons and other employers don't have the staff available. Usually, employer postings are preferably to agency postings.

9. Can you set up one or more "e-mail agents" that will send matching jobs to you when you are not at the site?

E-mail agent functions typically compare your requirements with new employer job postings and send you the results via e-mail if they find a match. So, you don't need to revisit the site yourself and run your search. Your "agents" will do the searching for you, and send you the results. You may need to return to the site to get the details about the job and to apply for it through the job site, but the search process is on automatic pilot.

10. Who has access to the database of resumes?

The Privacy Policy should tell you who has access to the resumes. In addition, you can check out the "employer" side of the job site to see how easy it is to gain access to the resumes. If access to the resume database is free, or only a nominal fee is charged for access to the resumes, find another job site.

Easily accessible resume databases may well contributing to the increase in junk e-mail and/or the increase in identity theft fraud.

(For more information modifying your resume to protect your privacy, see "[Creating Your Cyber-Safe Resume](http://www.Job-Hunt.org/resumecybersafe.shtml)" at <http://www.Job-Hunt.org/resumecybersafe.shtml>.)

11. Can you limit access to your personal contact information?

The best sites provide you with options to protect your contact information (name, e-

mail address, street address, phone numbers, etc.). Options range from sites that collect minimal contact information (name and e-mail address) to sites that offer to block the visibility of your contact information until you choose to release that information to a specific employer. Choose the option that works best for you. If you are currently employed, limiting access can help you protect your existing job.

Yes, blocking access to your contact information *may* make it more difficult for an employer to reach you quickly. However, it can also add to your “market value” in the eyes of an employer – you may be viewed as someone with a good job to protect and/or someone who is a knowledgeable Web user. It’s your privacy at risk, and your choice.

12. Can you control access to your resume when it’s in the resume database?

The best sites offer you options to control access to your resume. Particularly if you have a job to protect, you want to take advantage of these options. Even if you don’t have a job to protect at the point you register, you hopefully will at some point, so these options can be very useful.

Resume access control options come in a wide range of possibilities. The best sites offer you several choices. Two of the most common are:

- a. Keeping your resume out of the resume database that is searched by employers (or identifying it as excluded from employer searches). Choose this option if they offer no other way to protect your resume.
- b. Blocking some specific employers that you choose from viewing your resume but allowing all other employers to see it in their resume database searches. This option has a greater risk associated with it if an independent recruiter finds your resume and forwards it to your employer. In addition, your employer may not be using the job site when you *first* register, so they won’t be included in your exclusion list. But they may join it later. Or, they may belong (or join) under a name different from the one you expect.

Yes, as with the contact information restriction, this may also make it more difficult for recruiters to reach you.

13. Can you store more than one version of your resume (so that you can customize your resume for specific kinds of jobs)?

Many sites offer you the ability to store several different resumes and apply for a job using the version of your resume you have developed for that specific kind of opportunity. This capability can save you time and effort.

14. Will you be able to edit your resume once you have posted it?

You shouldn’t run into this very often anymore, but check to see if there is an “edit/update” option for you to access your resume. You can always find ways to

improve your resume, and they should allow you to do it.

15. Will you be able to delete your resume after you have found a job?

You don't want that old resume still available for view. If your new employer finds it, they may be concerned that you are getting ready to leave. If someone else finds it, they will see all of your personal professional information as well as your address and phone number.

Good job sites provide you with the capability to delete your resume and account or to put your resume in an "inactive" mode until you are ready for your next job search.

Tip: Don't ignore small sites and society/association sites.

The big sites attract thousands of employers and applicants so they are very popular. However, smaller sites frequently focus on a specialty (an industry, a job function, etc.) or a geographic area. They tend to attract smaller employers who are intimidated or can't afford the "super sites" and larger employers who have a "niche" need.

Professional association Web sites can be the hidden treasures of the online job search – they frequently offer an employment section of their Web site as a service to their members. Smart recruiters love these sites! Find them on Job-Hunt.org!

For more information and for over 1,800 carefully selected and categorized online career resources, be sure to visit Job-Hunt.Org. See [Career Resources by \(U.S.\) State](#), [Pick Your Employer](#), [Top 6 Job Online Search Mistakes](#), [Job Sites for Law and Law Enforcement](#), [Job Sites for Medicine and BioTech](#), and much more.

Please note: All of these protections work only with job sites that actually perform, behind the scenes, in the manner they describe to visitors in their privacy policies.

Pam Dixon, author of the *Job Searching Online for Dummies* book, researched Monster.com's privacy practices in a report commissioned and published by the Privacy Foundation. You can find Pam's report, "[Click you're hired. Or tracked...](#)" at the Privacy Foundation site, <http://www.privacyfoundation.org/privacywatch/monster.asp>, and also on Pam's site, <http://www.PamDixon.com>. Note that Monster denies the validity of the allegations in the Privacy Foundation report.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission holds sites responsible for living up to the terms in their privacy policies. So, if sites are misleading their visitors by not living up to the representations made in their privacy policies, the FTC should take care of it eventually. **Meanwhile, be very careful.**

Job-Hunt.Org Online Job Search Guide™
NETability, Inc. Marlborough, MA 01752
<mailto:Guide@netability.com>