A PLAIN-LANGUAGE GUIDE FOR JOB SEEKERS AND INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

New to the Canadian Job Market?

100+ Terms & Concepts Every Job Seeker and Internationally Trained Professional Should Know

Understand the language. Decode the unwritten rules. Communicate the value of your international experience.

WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

Starting a career, let alone in a new country, involves learning more than a new labour market. It can also mean learning a new professional vocabulary: hidden job market, informational interview, NOC, ATS, behavioural interview, asset qualification, networking, Canadian experience, and many more. This guide explains those terms in clear language and, where helpful, explains what they mean for your job search.

Use this guide to:

- prepare for employment counselling, workshops, networking and interviews;
- understand Canadian job postings and recruitment processes;
- research occupations, credentials and career pathways;
- translate international experience into language Canadian employers can understand; and
- identify questions to discuss with your World Skills Employment Specialist.

How to Use This Guide

You do not need to memorize every term. Start with the "Know This First" concepts, then use the themed sections as a reference during your job search. Some terms have precise legal or professional meanings; others are common workplace or recruitment language whose meaning can vary by employer.

A NOTE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Your international education, skills and professional experience remain valuable in Canada. The goal is not to erase your background or make it "Canadian." The goal is to understand how Canadian employers describe work, qualifications and hiring processes so you can communicate the relevance of what you already know and do.

Know This First: 20 Core Concepts

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
1. **Accomplishment Statement**	A résumé statement showing what you did and the result, impact or value of your work - not only your duties.
2. **ATS**	Applicant Tracking System: software some employers use to receive, organize, search or screen applications.
3. **Canadian Experience**	A phrase sometimes used to refer to experience working in Canada. In Ontario, employers should assess relevant experience regardless of where it was gained; strict Canadian-experience requirements can create human-rights barriers.
4. **Canadian-Style Résumé**	A concise, employer-focused résumé that highlights relevant skills, accomplishments and experience and generally excludes personal details unrelated to the job.
5. **Commensurate Employment**	Employment reasonably aligned with your education, skills, experience and professional background.
6. **Cover Letter**	A letter accompanying a résumé that connects your qualifications and motivation to the employer's needs.
7. **Elevator Pitch**	A short professional introduction explaining who you are, what you offer and what kind of opportunity or information you are seeking.

8. Foreign Credential Recognition	The process of determining whether education, training and professional experience obtained outside Canada meet standards for a regulated profession or compulsory trade.
9. Hidden Job Market	Job opportunities that are not publicly advertised and may be filled through internal candidates, referrals, networking or direct recruitment.
10. Informational Interview	A conversation you request to learn about a profession, employer or sector. It is not a job interview and is not a request to be hired.
11. Labour Market Information (LMI)	Information about occupations, industries, employers, wages, skills, job openings and employment trends. Use it to make informed career decisions.
12. Networking	Building and maintaining professional relationships through which people exchange information, advice, introductions and opportunities.
13. NOC	The National Occupational Classification: Canada's system for organizing occupations according to the work performed.
14. Professional Reference	A person who can speak credibly about your work, skills and professional conduct.
15. Referral	When someone directs, introduces or recommends you to an employer, contact or opportunity.
16. Regulated Occupation	An occupation where provincial or territorial law requires a license, registration or certification to practice or use a protected title.
17. STAR Method	Situation, Task, Action, Result: a structure commonly used to answer behavioural interview questions with concrete examples.
18. Tailored Résumé	A résumé adapted for a particular job so the most relevant skills, keywords and accomplishments are easy to see.
19. Target Occupation	The specific occupation or type of work you are pursuing. A focused search usually has one or a small number of realistic targets.
20. Transferable Skills	Skills you can use across jobs, employers or industries, such as leadership, analysis, project management and communication.

1. Understanding the Canadian Labour Market

These terms help you research where your skills fit and where opportunities may exist.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Alternative / Related Career	A different occupation that uses some of your existing education, knowledge or skills, sometimes with fewer licensing barriers.
Career Action Plan / Employment Action Plan	A practical plan identifying your employment goal, gaps, actions, resources, responsibilities and next steps.
Career Pathway	The possible progression of roles, education and experiences through which a career can develop.
Career Pivot / Career Transition	A deliberate move into a different role, occupation or sector while using some existing experience and transferable skills.
Competency	A combination of knowledge, skills, behaviours and abilities used to perform effectively.
In-Demand Occupation	An occupation experiencing relatively strong employer demand. Demand can change over time and by region.
Industry / Sector	The part of the economy in which an organization operates, such as finance, healthcare, technology, construction, government or non-profit.
Job Outlook / Employment Outlook	An assessment of expected employment opportunities for an occupation in a particular location and time period.
Job Prospects	The opportunities for employment in an occupation or region based on current and expected labour-market conditions.
Job Title	The name an employer gives a particular role. Similar work can have different titles across organizations.
Job Vacancy	A position an employer is actively seeking to fill.
Labour Market	The environment in which employers seek workers and people seek employment. Conditions vary by occupation, industry, location and economic cycle.
Labour Shortage	A situation where employers have difficulty finding enough workers with the required skills or availability.

Median Wage	The wage at the middle of a wage distribution: half of reported wages are above it and half below it.
NOC - National Occupational Classification	Canada's national system for classifying occupations. NOC 2021 uses a five-digit structure.
Occupation	A type of work involving a similar set of duties and skills. An occupation can include many different job titles.
Occupational Profile	A description of an occupation, often including duties, skills, education, wages, licensing requirements and outlook.
Occupational Requirements	The education, training, experience, skills, licensing or other qualifications typically required for an occupation.
Reskilling	Learning substantially new skills to move into a different occupation or type of work.
Skills Gap	The difference between the skills you currently have and those required for your target work.
Soft Skills / Employability Skills	Skills related to how you work, communicate, collaborate, solve problems and adapt.
Target Occupation	The occupation or type of role you have chosen to pursue.
Technical / Hard Skills	Specific abilities or knowledge required to perform particular work, such as programming, accounting, laboratory techniques or CAD.
TEER	Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities. The NOC uses TEER categories 0 to 5 to describe typical requirements and responsibilities.
Transferable Skills	Skills that remain useful across jobs and industries, such as leadership, analysis, communication and project management.
Upskilling	Developing additional or more advanced skills to strengthen your qualifications in your current or related field.
Wage Range	The range of pay reported or offered for a job or occupation. Wages vary by employer, region, experience and other factors.

2. Credentials, Licensing & Professional Recognition

Credential recognition and professional licensing are not the same thing. Always confirm requirements with the regulator for your occupation and province or territory.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Bridging / Bridge Training Program	Training and support designed to help internationally trained professionals address gaps, prepare for licensing, gain workplace exposure, access mentorship and connect with employers.
Canadian Equivalency	A comparison indicating how an international educational credential relates to a Canadian credential.
Certification	Recognition that specified professional, occupational or technical standards have been met. Whether it is mandatory depends on the occupation.
Compulsory Trade	A skilled trade for which certification or registration is legally required in the relevant province or territory.
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	Ongoing learning undertaken to maintain or strengthen professional knowledge and skills; some professions require documented CPD.
Credential	A qualification such as a degree, diploma, certificate, license or professional designation.
Credential Assessment	An assessment of an educational or professional credential. The purpose and authority of assessments differ, so check what your regulator or employer requires.
Educational Credential Assessment (ECA)	An assessment used for certain immigration purposes to compare foreign education with Canadian education. An ECA does not automatically grant professional licensure.
Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR)	The process of assessing whether education, training and experience obtained outside Canada meet Canadian standards for a regulated profession or compulsory trade.
Good Character / Suitability Requirement	A requirement used by some regulated professions to assess conduct or suitability for registration. Requirements vary by regulator.
Internationally Trained Professional (ITP)	A professional whose education, training and/or significant professional experience was obtained outside Canada.

Job Shadowing	Observing a professional at work for a limited period to learn about an occupation, workplace or role.
License / Licensure	Formal authorization to practice a regulated occupation or profession.
Licensing Examination	An examination required by some regulators as part of professional licensure or certification.
Mentorship	A developmental relationship in which a more experienced professional shares knowledge, perspective, advice and connections. A mentor is not expected to find you a job.
Non-Regulated Occupation	An occupation without a legal licensing requirement to practice. Employers can still establish education, experience and skill requirements.
Prior Learning Recognition / PLAR	A process for assessing knowledge and skills gained through work, training or life experience for possible recognition by an educational institution or other body.
Professional Association	An organization representing or supporting people in a profession or sector. It is not necessarily the profession's regulator.
Professional Designation	A recognized professional title or letters used after a name once applicable requirements have been met.
Protected Title	A professional or occupational title that only authorized people may legally use.
Registration	Formal enrolment with a regulator or professional body after required standards have been met.
Regulated Occupation / Profession	An occupation governed by provincial or territorial law where a license, registration or certification may be required to practice or use a protected title.
Regulatory Body / Regulator	The organization legally responsible for regulating a profession or trade in a jurisdiction.

3. Job Search Strategy, Networking & the Hidden Job Market

In Canada, job searching often involves relationship-building as well as responding to advertised vacancies.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Cold Contact / Cold Outreach	Professional outreach to someone you do not already know, often by email or LinkedIn.
Elevator Pitch	A brief professional introduction explaining your background, value and goal.
Employee Referral	A recommendation made by an employee of an organization regarding a potential candidate.
Employer Research	Learning about an organization's work, priorities, culture, products, challenges and hiring needs before applying or networking.
Follow-Up	A professional message or action after an application, meeting, networking conversation or interview to maintain communication.
Headhunter / Executive Recruiter	A recruiter who actively searches for candidates, often for specialized or senior roles.
Hidden Job Market	Opportunities that are not publicly advertised and may be filled through referrals, internal candidates, networks or direct recruitment.
Hiring Manager	The manager responsible for the role being filled and usually involved in selecting the successful candidate.
Job Alert	An automated notification when new job postings match selected criteria.
Job Board	A website or platform where employers advertise job vacancies.
Job Lead	Information suggesting that an employment opportunity may exist.
Job Search Strategy	A planned approach to finding work using multiple methods, such as targeted applications, networking, employer research, referrals and recruiter outreach.
Networking	Building and maintaining professional relationships through which people exchange information, advice, introductions and opportunities.
Networking Event	An event designed to help people meet and develop professional contacts.

Personal Brand	The professional reputation and message you communicate through your résumé, LinkedIn profile, portfolio, conversations and work.
Professional Association Event	A conference, seminar, webinar or gathering hosted by an industry or professional association that can provide learning and networking opportunities.
Professional Introduction	A concise way to introduce your professional identity, expertise and current objective in conversation or writing.
Professional Network	People connected to you through work, education, professional associations, volunteering, community activities and online professional platforms.
Recruiter	A professional responsible for sourcing, attracting or screening candidates for employment.
Recruitment / Staffing Agency	A business that helps employers find workers. Agencies may specialize in particular industries, permanent hiring, temporary staffing or contracts.
Referral	An introduction, recommendation or direction to a person, employer or opportunity.
Talent Acquisition	The employer function responsible for attracting and hiring people, often including sourcing, recruitment and workforce planning.
Talent Pool / Candidate Pool	A group of potential candidates an organization may consider for current or future opportunities.
Target Employer List	A list of organizations you intentionally research, follow and approach because they align with your career target.
Value Proposition	A clear statement of the value you can bring to an employer - the problems you can solve, results you can create or capabilities you offer.
Volunteer Experience	Unpaid service that can build community connections and demonstrate skills. It should be accurately identified as volunteer rather than paid employment.
Warm Contact	A person with whom you already have a relationship or an introduction through a mutual contact.

4. Résumés, Cover Letters & Online Applications

Your résumé is a marketing document, not a complete biography. Its job is to make your relevant value easy for an employer to understand.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Accomplishment Statement	A résumé statement showing an action and its result, impact, scale or value.
Action Verb	A strong verb that describes what you did, such as led, developed, analyzed, implemented, coordinated, improved or negotiated.
Application Form	An employer's standardized form for collecting candidate information. Complete it accurately even when the same information appears on your résumé.
Asset / Preferred Qualification	A qualification that can strengthen a candidacy but may not be mandatory.
ATS - Applicant Tracking System	Software some employers use to receive, organize, search, rank or screen job applications.
ATS-Friendly Résumé	A résumé using clear headings, readable formatting and relevant terminology so applicant-tracking software and human readers can process it easily.
Canadian-Style Résumé	A concise, employer-focused résumé emphasizing relevant skills, experience and accomplishments. Personal details unrelated to the job, such as age, marital status or a photograph, are generally not included.
Career Change Résumé	A résumé that emphasizes transferable skills, relevant accomplishments and the connection between previous experience and a new career target.
Chronological Résumé	A résumé organized mainly by employment history, normally beginning with the most recent experience.
Combination / Hybrid Résumé	A résumé combining a skills-focused presentation with chronological employment history.
Easy Apply / One-Click Apply	A simplified online application process available on some job platforms. It may still require tailoring and additional employer screening.
Employment Gap	A period when you were not in paid employment. Gaps can have many reasons and can often be explained briefly and confidently when relevant.

Equivalent Combination of Education and Experience	Wording indicating that the employer may consider relevant experience, education or training together rather than requiring only one exact credential.
Essential / Required Qualification	A qualification the employer considers necessary for the position.
Functional Résumé	A résumé organized mainly around skill areas rather than chronological work history.
Keyword	A word or phrase from the posting or occupation that identifies an important skill, qualification, technology, responsibility or requirement.
LinkedIn Profile	An online professional profile used for networking, professional visibility, employer research and recruitment.
Master Résumé	A comprehensive private record of your experience, skills, projects and accomplishments used to create shorter targeted résumés.
Overqualified	A term sometimes used when an employer believes a candidate's qualifications exceed the role's requirements. It is an employer perception, not a measure of your professional worth.
Portfolio	A collection of work samples or evidence demonstrating your capabilities.
Professional Summary / Profile	A short opening section summarizing the qualifications and value most relevant to the target role.
Quantified Accomplishment	An accomplishment supported by numbers, percentages, dollar values, volumes, time saved or other measurable evidence.
Résumé vs. CV	For most Canadian non-academic jobs, employers request a résumé. A CV is usually longer and more common in academic, research and some specialized contexts.
Screening Question	A question used early in an application to determine whether candidates meet particular requirements.
Summary of Qualifications	A concise group of statements showing the strongest qualifications you bring to a position.
Targeted / Tailored Résumé	A résumé adapted to a particular opportunity so relevant experience, skills, keywords and accomplishments are prominent.
Work Sample	An example of work used to demonstrate ability, such as writing, analysis, design, code, a presentation or project.

5. Reading Canadian Job Postings

Job postings contain both formal requirements and recruitment shorthand. Read for the underlying skill or evidence the employer is asking for.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Benefits	Non-wage compensation that may include health, dental, insurance, pension, leave or other programs.
Bilingual Position	A role requiring or preferring proficiency in two languages. In Ottawa and the federal public service, this often means English and French.
Client-Facing / Customer-Facing	Work involving direct interaction with clients, customers or external stakeholders.
Closing Date	The deadline by which an application is expected. Some employers may review applications before the deadline.
Competitive Salary	A general employer claim that compensation is comparable with the market; it does not specify the actual amount.
Cross-Functional	Work involving people from different departments, functions or professional disciplines.
Demonstrated Experience	Wording indicating that you should be able to provide concrete evidence or examples of having done the work.
Detail-Oriented	Someone expected to work accurately and notice important details.
Excellent Communication Skills	The ability to communicate effectively for the specific work involved. It does not mean having a particular accent.
Fast-Paced Environment	A workplace where workload, deadlines or priorities may change quickly.
Flexible Schedule	Working hours may vary or include evenings, weekends or changes based on operational needs.
Job Description	A description of a role's purpose, duties, responsibilities, qualifications and working conditions.
Job Posting / Job Advertisement	A public notice that an employer is recruiting for a position.

Open Until Filled	The employer may continue accepting applications until it hires a suitable candidate.
Preferred / Nice to Have / Asset	Language indicating that a qualification would strengthen an application but may not be mandatory.
Proven Track Record	Evidence of repeated or meaningful success, usually demonstrated through accomplishments and results.
Required / Must Have	Language indicating that the employer considers the qualification important or necessary.
Results-Oriented / Results-Driven	Focused on achieving outcomes and measurable results, not only completing activities.
Salary Range / Pay Range	The minimum and maximum compensation associated with a role or salary band.
Self-Starter	Someone expected to take initiative and move work forward without constant direction.
Stakeholder	A person, group or organization affected by or able to influence a project, service, decision or organization.
Stakeholder Management	Building, communicating with and managing relationships with important internal or external stakeholders.
Team Player	Someone expected to collaborate effectively and contribute to shared goals.
Travel Required	The role may require work-related travel. Review the frequency, locations and transportation expectations.
Valid Driver's License / Access to Vehicle	A requirement related to travel or transportation for the role. These are not identical requirements, so read the wording carefully.
Years of Experience	An employer's indication of the experience level it expects. Read the whole posting and assess the substance of your experience, not only the number.

6. Interviews, Assessments & Selection

Canadian selection processes often ask candidates to provide specific evidence of past behaviour, results and competencies.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Background Check	Verification that may include employment, education, criminal record or other information depending on the role and applicable law.
Behavioural Interview Question	A question asking for a real past example, often beginning with "Tell me about a time when…"
Candidate Accommodation	Adjustments to a recruitment or assessment process to remove disability-related or other protected barriers where required by human-rights law.
Candidate Shortlist	A smaller group of applicants selected to continue in the hiring process.
Case Study / Case Interview	An exercise requiring you to analyze a scenario or problem and explain your approach.
Common Interview Question	Frequently asked questions used by employers to learn about a candidate's experience, skills, motivation and suitability for the role, such as "Tell me about yourself," "Why are you interested in this position?" and "What are your strengths?"
Competency-Based Interview	An interview structured to assess specific competencies using evidence and examples.
Hiring Interview	A formal conversation used to assess a candidate's qualifications, experience and suitability for a role.
Interview Assessment Criteria	The skills, knowledge, competencies and qualifications against which interview answers are evaluated.
Interview Follow-Up / Thank-You Email	A brief professional message after an interview thanking the interviewer and reinforcing interest.
Panel Interview	An interview conducted by several interviewers at the same time.
Presentation Interview	A selection process requiring a candidate to prepare or deliver a presentation.

Reference / Professional Reference	A person who can credibly discuss your work, skills, accomplishments and professional conduct.
Reference Check	When an employer contacts references to verify or learn more about your experience and performance.
Screening Interview / Phone Screen	An early, usually shorter conversation used to determine whether a candidate should proceed.
Second / Final Interview	A later interview stage, often involving more detailed assessment or additional decision-makers.
Security Screening / Security Clearance	Additional screening required for certain jobs involving sensitive information, systems, facilities or public trust.
Situational Interview Question	A hypothetical question asking what you would do in a particular situation.
STAR Method	A structure for answering behavioural questions clearly. Situation - the context or background needed to understand your example, Task - your responsibility, goal or challenge in the situation), Action - the specific steps you personally took. This is usually the most important part of the answer, and Result - what happened because of your actions, including outcomes, learning or impact.
Technical Assessment	A test or exercise used to assess occupation-specific knowledge or skills.
Work Simulation	An assessment designed to resemble tasks that would be performed in the job.
Written Exercise	A hiring assessment used to evaluate writing, analysis, judgement, technical knowledge or other competencies.

7. Canadian Experience, Workplace Language & Inclusion

IMPORTANT: "CANADIAN EXPERIENCE" IS NOT A MEASURE OF YOUR VALUE

The Ontario Human Rights Commission states that requiring Canadian experience can create barriers for newcomers and may violate the Ontario Human Rights Code. Employers should assess relevant qualifications and prior experience regardless of where they were obtained, unless a Canadian-experience requirement can be justified as a legitimate job requirement.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Accessibility	Designing environments, services, information and processes so people with disabilities can participate and access opportunities.
Belonging	The experience of being respected, included and able to participate meaningfully in a workplace or community.
Canadian Experience	A phrase sometimes used to mean experience working in Canada. In Ontario, relying on Canadian experience as a hiring shortcut can create discriminatory barriers; relevant international experience should be considered.
Canadian Workplace Culture	A broad phrase for workplace behaviours and expectations encountered in Canada. There is no single Canadian workplace culture; practices vary by organization, industry, region and team.
Code-Switching	Adjusting language, communication style or behaviour in different social or professional settings. The term can carry cultural and identity implications.
Constructive Feedback	Specific, respectful feedback intended to help improve performance or outcomes.
Culture Add	A newer phrase emphasizing what different perspectives and experiences a person can contribute to an organization rather than whether they resemble existing employees.
Culture Fit / Fit	A subjective phrase sometimes used to describe compatibility with a workplace. Employers should assess job-related behaviours and competencies rather than using vague notions of fit to exclude candidates.
Direct / Indirect Communication	Different ways people express requests, disagreement or feedback. Communication expectations vary by workplace and individual.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI / EDI)	Approaches intended to support representation, fairness, access, participation and inclusion in workplaces.
Employee Resource Group (ERG)	A voluntary, employee-led group that brings together colleagues around shared identities, experiences, interests or goals, such as newcomers, women, employees with disabilities or cultural communities. ERGs often support connection, inclusion, professional development and workplace belonging.
Feedback	Information about performance, behaviour or work quality intended to reinforce strengths or support improvement.
Intercultural Communication	Communicating effectively across different cultural backgrounds, expectations and communication styles.
Microaggression	A term used for subtle comments or behaviours that can communicate stereotypes or exclusion toward members of marginalized groups.
Organizational Culture	The values, behaviours, practices and working environment characteristic of a particular organization.
Professional Boundaries	Expectations about appropriate responsibilities, relationships, privacy and communication at work.
Psychological Safety	A team environment where people feel able to ask questions, raise concerns, acknowledge mistakes or contribute ideas without fear of humiliation or punishment.
Self-Advocacy	Communicating your contributions, needs, accomplishments and career interests appropriately.
Unconscious / Implicit Bias	Automatic associations or assumptions that may influence judgement without deliberate intent.
Workplace Accommodation	Adjustments that remove barriers related to protected human-rights grounds where the legal duty to accommodate applies.
Workplace Communication	How people exchange information at work through conversation, email, meetings, presentations, feedback and other channels.
Workplace Etiquette	Common expectations for professional behaviour, communication and interaction in a particular workplace.
Workplace Norms	Written and unwritten expectations about communication, meetings, teamwork, punctuality, feedback and professional behaviour.

8. Types of Employment & Working Arrangements

The word “contract” is especially important to clarify because it can describe very different legal and tax relationships.

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Casual Employment	Employment that may be short-term, irregular or as-needed. The meaning and legal implications vary by employer and jurisdiction.
Commensurate Employment	Employment reasonably aligned with your education, skills, experience and professional background.
Contract Position	A phrase that can mean either fixed-term employment or independent contract work. Clarify the legal employment relationship.
Co-op	A work experience formally integrated into an educational program.
Employee	A worker in an employer-employee relationship. Employment status affects matters such as payroll deductions, benefits and legal rights.
Full-Time	Employment involving the employer’s normal full-time schedule. Exact hours vary by workplace.
Gig Work	Short-term, task-based or project-based work, often performed through platforms or as independent work.
Hybrid Work	A combination of remote work and work at an employer or client location.
Independent Contractor	A self-employed person or business providing services under a contract for services rather than an employment relationship. The actual relationship determines status, not only the label.
Indeterminate	A term commonly used in the federal public service for employment without a specified end date.
Internship	A structured work-learning experience. Eligibility, compensation and employment status vary.
On-Call	A work arrangement where a worker may be contacted or scheduled when needed.
On-Site / In-Person	Work performed at an employer, client or designated work location.

Part-Time	Employment involving fewer hours than the employer's normal full-time schedule.
Permanent Employment	Employment without a predetermined end date.
Placement / Work Placement	A period of workplace experience connected to training, education, employment programming or professional requirements.
Probationary Period	An initial period of employment during which the employment relationship may be evaluated. Legal implications depend on applicable law and the employment agreement.
Remote Work	Work performed away from the employer's regular physical workplace.
Self-Employed	Operating your own business or professional practice rather than working as an employee.
Shift Work	Work organized into scheduled periods such as days, evenings, nights or weekends.
Survival Job	An informal term sometimes used for work taken primarily to meet immediate financial needs. This guide prefers "transitional employment" because it better reflects career strategy and dignity.
Temporary Employment	Employment intended to last for a limited period.
Term / Fixed-Term Position	Employment with a specified end date or duration.
Transitional Employment	Employment taken while working toward a longer-term career goal. It can provide income, experience, contacts and local labour-market exposure.
Underemployment	Working fewer hours than desired or in work that does not fully use your education, skills or experience.

9. Job Offers, Compensation & Starting a New Role

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Base Salary	Regular salary before bonuses, overtime or other additional compensation.
Benefits Package	Employer-provided benefits that may include extended health, dental, insurance, retirement plans and other programs.
Compensation	The financial and non-financial value received for work, including salary or wages and potentially bonuses and benefits.
Buddy System / Workplace Buddy	An onboarding practice where a new employee is paired with a colleague who helps them become familiar with the workplace, team, routines, systems and unwritten practices, and provides an approachable person for everyday questions.
Conditional Offer	An offer that depends on specified conditions being satisfied, such as references, credentials or security screening.
Employment Agreement / Contract	A document setting out terms and conditions of employment. Read it carefully before accepting.
Hourly Wage/Salary	Pay calculated according to the number of hours worked.
Internal Mobility	Moving to another role, team or level within the same organization.
Notice Period	The amount of notice associated with ending employment. Requirements can arise from legislation, common law or contract.
Onboarding	The process of helping a new employee enter the organization, learn systems and policies, understand expectations and connect with the team.
Orientation	Initial information or training introducing the workplace, policies, role and responsibilities.
Paid Time Off (PTO)	A general term for paid leave. The types of leave included depend on the employer.
Pension / Retirement Plan	An employer or workplace plan intended to provide retirement income. Plan structures vary.
Performance Expectations	The results, behaviours, responsibilities or standards an employee is expected to meet.

Performance Review	A formal or informal process for discussing an employee's performance, goals, development and feedback.
Professional Development	Learning and development activities that strengthen knowledge, skills or career growth.
Promotion	Advancement to a role with greater responsibility, scope, status or compensation.
Salary Negotiation	Discussion about compensation and sometimes other employment terms before accepting an offer.
Start Date	The agreed date on which employment begins.
Total Compensation	The combined value of salary or wages plus bonuses, benefits, pension contributions and other compensation.
Unpaid Leave	An approved period away from work during which an employee does not receive regular wages or salary. Eligibility, job protection and conditions depend on the type of leave, applicable employment legislation, the employment agreement and workplace policies.
Vacation Entitlement	Paid or unpaid vacation time available under employment standards, employment contracts or employer policy.
Verbal Offer	An employer communicates an intention to hire you verbally. Important terms should ultimately be confirmed in writing.
Unwritten Rules of the Canadian Workplace	Informal expectations about how people communicate, collaborate, take initiative, give and receive feedback, interact with supervisors and behave professionally. These are not official rules and can vary significantly across organizations, industries and teams.
Written Offer / Offer Letter	Written confirmation of proposed employment and key terms.

10. Public Sector & Federal Government Terms You May Encounter

TERM / CONCEPT	PLAIN-LANGUAGE MEANING
Asset Qualification	A qualification that is not essential but may be used to select among qualified candidates.
Casual Worker	A short-term federal hiring mechanism with specific limits and conditions; it is distinct from indeterminate or term employment.
Essential Qualification	A qualification that must be met for appointment to the position.
Federal Public Service	Departments and agencies of the Government of Canada. Its hiring terminology and processes can differ from private-sector recruitment.
Indeterminate Appointment	An appointment with no specified end date.
Operational Requirement	A job-related condition or requirement connected to how the work must be performed.
Organizational Need	A staffing consideration connected to an organization's workforce or operational priorities.
Pool of Qualified Candidates	A group of candidates who have met required assessment criteria and may be considered for current or future appointments.
Public Service	Government organizations and employees responsible for administering public programs and services.
Reliability Status / Security Clearance	Levels of personnel security screening required for access to certain government information, assets or workplaces.
Second-Language Evaluation	Assessment of official-language proficiency for certain federal public-service positions.
Selection Process	A structured hiring process used to assess candidates against stated qualifications.
Statement of Merit Criteria	In federal staffing, the criteria used to assess candidates, including essential qualifications and potentially asset qualifications, operational requirements and organizational needs.
Term Appointment	An appointment for a specified period.

11. Ten Unwritten Job-Search Rules Worth Knowing

1. One résumé is not enough.

Keep a master résumé, but tailor the version you send so the employer can quickly see the qualifications most relevant to that particular role.

2. Your previous job title may not translate directly.

Search by duties, skills, NOC groups and alternative titles - not only the title you used in another country.

3. Responsibilities and accomplishments are different.

Employers need to understand what you did, but accomplishments show the result, scale and value of your work.

4. Networking is part of job searching.

Do not wait until online applications fail. Build professional relationships while researching employers and applying.

5. An informational interview is for learning.

Approach it with curiosity. Ask about the occupation, organization, trends and advice rather than immediately asking the person for a job.

6. International references can still be useful.

Choose people who can speak credibly about your work and who can be reached and communicate with the employer.

7. “Tell me about yourself” is usually professional.

Prepare a concise career-focused response connecting your background, strengths and current target rather than giving your complete personal history.

8. Evidence matters.

Prepare examples, results, numbers, projects and stories that demonstrate your skills. This helps with résumés, interviews and networking.

9. Learn the local context without diminishing your international expertise.

You may need to learn Canadian legislation, standards, terminology, technologies or market practices. That is different from treating your previous experience as irrelevant.

10. A job search is a project.

Track applications, contacts, follow-ups, learning goals and outcomes. Review what is working and adjust your strategy.

Trusted Canadian Resources

Use these authoritative resources to confirm current information, research occupations and continue learning. Requirements and labour-market conditions can change.

RESOURCE	HOW IT CAN HELP
Job Bank - Career Planning	Career planning, labour-market research, job search, networking and hidden job market.
Job Bank - Network and Stay Connected	Networking, mentorship, staying current in your industry and the hidden job market.
Job Bank - Trend Analysis	Wages, outlooks, occupational information and labour-market trends.
Government of Canada - Foreign Credential Recognition	Information for internationally trained professionals entering regulated professions or compulsory trades.
Statistics Canada - National Occupational Classification (NOC)	Official information on NOC 2021 and TEER categories.
Ontario Bridge Training Program	Ontario programs supporting internationally trained skilled newcomers with training, licensing preparation, mentorship, work experience and employer connections.
Ontario Human Rights Commission - Removing the Canadian Experience Barrier	Human-rights guidance on Canadian-experience requirements in employment and professional regulation.
Canada Revenue Agency - Employee or Self-Employed	Official guidance for understanding employment status and the distinction between an employee and a self-employed worker.
World Skills - Newcomer Career Resources	World Skills career resources and links for newcomers in Ottawa and beyond.
World Skills - Employment Ontario Integrated Employment Services	Personalized employment services, career supports, labour-market information, training and employer connections.

About World Skills Employment Centre

World Skills Employment Centre is a non-profit employment and career services organization committed to helping people build meaningful careers, strengthen their economic independence and thrive in their communities. World Skills has deep roots in supporting newcomers and internationally trained professionals and works with employers across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

ottawa-worldskills.org • (613) 233-0453 • ws@ottawa-worldskills.org

237 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1B8

IMPORTANT

This is not an exhaustive list. This guide provides general career-development information and is not legal, immigration, tax, licensing or human-rights advice. Occupational requirements, professional regulations, employment standards and recruitment practices can change. Confirm requirements with the appropriate regulator, government authority or employer. Your World Skills Employment Specialist can help you identify reliable sources and develop a strategy for your individual career goals.

Guide contains 265 term/concept entries plus 10 practical job-search rules.

This Guide was prepared with the help of an AI tool.