



Congratulations! You are coming home soon, and you will need employment. This checklist is designed to help you hit the ground running. One of the largest contributors to inmates returning to prison is a failure to return to work. It is important to recognize that this can be a challenge, but it's one that you can and must overcome.

## Let's get started!

**STEP 1 Begin collecting letters of reference to include with your job applications.** Your efforts to begin securing a job upon release should begin now. This is another good reason to stay out of trouble while you're incarcerated – so you can ask for letters of reference from your prison chaplain, friends on the outside, etc. Ask that letters be addressed “To Whom It May Concern” and that they highlight your best skills, work ethic, and job-related social traits (e.g., cooperation, leadership). Make copies of the originals so you can include these with every job application.

*Additional Resource! If you or your reference needs additional letter writing tips, our [Writing a Professional Letter Self-help Guide](#) is a great resource.*



**SEND A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE TO\*:**

WriteAPrisoner.com  
Writing a Professional Letter Self-help  
P.O. Box 10  
Edgewater, FL 32132 USA

\* Prison staff or pen-pals can also print this guide at  
<http://www.writeaprisoner.com/self-help>

**STEP 2 Know what area you will be living in, and secure housing.** Before you can find a job, you need a place to live. Friends and family members may provide guidance on this. Try to avoid neighborhoods and settings that are affiliated in any way with the charges that resulted in your prison sentence. Seek the freshest start possible by living in an area where you have no bad history. If you are unable to live with a friend or family member, ask their help in finding a place to live upon release.

**STEP 3 The computer is a wondrous tool, and it can help you before you even hit the street!** If you are still incarcerated, check with staff at your facility, and get a WriteAPrisoner.com Resume posted immediately if you are coming home within the year. Ask staff to help you enter the information here: <http://www.writeaprisoner.com/back-to-work/form-inmateEmployment.aspx>. There is never any fee to anyone for this service. If any employers in your area

are using our service, an email notice will be sent to them with your contact address and employment information. Lining up employment before release is the ideal situation, and we have helped other soon-to-be-released inmates do just this!

*The preparation for good work tomorrow is to do good work today.*

-Elbert Hubbard

**STEP 4 Scan the Want Ads!** If possible, have your family or friends pick up multiple local papers and begin a list of potential jobs for which you are qualified. Do this approximately two to

four weeks prior to your release. Have the list in hand immediately when you come home, and get right on the phone, and begin lining up job interviews. The job market is tough, but it's not impossible.

**STEP 5 Prepare your “free world resume” (moving beyond your WriteAPrisoner.com resume if that did not result in a job offer).** We provide online examples and tips on preparing resumes, because there are too many points to cover in this document. Please visit: [www.writeaprisoner.com/post-prison-resumes.aspx](http://www.writeaprisoner.com/post-prison-resumes.aspx) for details on writing a great resume.

**STEP 6** If you possess a specific trade or craft such as woodworking, pool cleaning, plumbing, etc., post this on **Craigslist.com**. You are able to post on this website as many times as you like. Most listings expire after a brief time, so continue to aggressively pursue employment here. Craigslist.com is the nation's largest classified ads website. In addition, employers are posting job listings here, and you should routinely come back to this website to apply to any jobs that meet your specifications. Other useful job websites include Monster.com and Quintcareers.com. If you are 55 or older, ExperienceWorks.org can help you find employment. Don't stop there... use the Internet to post your skills wherever possible. Until you have a job, make looking for work your job!

**STEP 7** Call your **Department of Labor office**. Tell them that you are a recently released ex-offender, and ask if they have any special assistance for you to find employment. They can be found in the phone book or search Google.com by typing in: department of labor (YOUR STATE). You can also check with the local unemployment office as jobs are often posted there.

**STEP 8** **Get ID**. Although it may take some time to get a new driver's license, you can request an official state ID at your local driver's license office. Call ahead to see if you need an appointment and to see what kind of information you will need to provide. Most employers will ask to make a photocopy of your official ID, so it is best to take care of this right away.

**STEP 9** **Plan your transportation**. If you don't have a driver's license and/or access to a car, carefully plan for transportation both to your job interview and to the job itself once hired. Find out if there is a bus, train, subway or other type of public transportation that can get you there on time. Few things make a worse impression than arriving late.

**STEP 10** **Build your wardrobe**. Many people come out of prison with a great support system of family and friends who can help you purchase new clothes, but if you are without these resources, try your local Goodwill, Salvation Army or other used clothing store. Typically, you can find affordable used suits and dress clothes that can get you through any job interview. Presentation is a must. Dress in clean, professional attire.

**STEP 11** **Prepare for the interview**. Be neatly groomed. Be early for your interview. Be informed about the business and job ahead of time. Be prepared with any questions you might have. Be prepared to disclose your conviction on a job application; this will not necessarily prevent you from being hired, but do report honestly if this question is asked on an application. Make eye contact and smile during the interview. Believe in yourself.

You need only Internet access and the will to achieve your goals to make use of the suggestions provided on this checklist. Libraries have the Internet access, and you have the rest! We welcome you back to this side of the fence, and we wish you all the best in finding employment and happiness. One of the most rewarding letters we receive is from former members who are still out of prison and doing great. We sincerely hope you join them!

Success story or suggestion? We want to know what worked for you so we can share it with other inmates.  
If you have a suggestion to make about this resource, please do so at:  
Self-help Suggestion - P.O. Box 10 - Edgewater, FL 32132 USA

**Individuals who obtain employment when released lower their recidivism rate by 68.5%.**

Data based on a 2010 study by Tripodi, Kim, and Bender published in *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*

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