

## **Unit 2: How to Gain Experience in the Food Service Industry**

Are the usual job hunting techniques not working? Try these ideas to get your foot in the door.

**Set Up an Informational Interview** In an informational interview, the employer is not pressured to hire you. Call and arrange an appointment for about 30 minutes. Speak clearly, and be polite. Arrive and leave on time. Ask the employer questions about the daily requirements of specific jobs, as well as good and bad aspects of the business.

Here are some sample questions:

- How did you get into the food service business?
- What was your first job like?
- What did you do to advance your position?
- What are the best and worst parts of your job?
- What would make your job easier?

Take notes. Consider asking the employer to be a guest speaker. Food service professionals love to talk about the business. When you call later to arrange a real job interview, mention what you learned from the earlier interview. See if one of your teachers will accept this as an assignment that you can share with your class.

**Create a Résumé** Enhance a simple résumé with a portfolio, even if you have never had a job. Many online résumé builders are easy to use. Be honest, and list activities that show responsibility and motivation. Include awards, volunteer experiences, summer courses, camp experiences, and memberships in organizations. Bring letters of reference from culinary teachers, club advisors, and neighbors. List topics and food preparation experience from family and consumer science or food and nutrition classes.

**Help with Paperwork** If you have computer skills, offer to help create forms for scheduling and food purchasing or graphics for advertisements. Ask if the menu needs updating. Cooking shows on TV have great ideas. Find cookbooks that match the restaurant's theme. Bring unique recipe suggestions. Short-term free services can become paid positions.

**Work a Trial Shift** Offer to work a shift for free to prove you can do the job. Food service entry-level jobs require minimum skills and knowledge. Some jobs become available on short notice and may be offered to you.

**Look for Seasonal Jobs** Apply for seasonal retail jobs during the holidays. Part-time positions are perfect for teens during school. They often become summer jobs. Work hours are limited by law so that students can work and still complete their homework.

**Make Education a Priority** There is no substitute for education. Do not leave school to work full time for minimum wage. Complete your education to guarantee better jobs with higher pay.

Remember, have a positive attitude, act professionally, and do not give up!