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Learn Job Skills on the Web

The news tells us the sad story every day: U.S. unemployment figures are running at nearly 10%. Unemployment is a "lagging indicator," so even as the economy improves, there won't be much hiring going on for a while. That means that the competition for the few open jobs will remain fierce for the foreseeable future. Successful candidates must possess basic workplace competencies such as good communication skills and the ability to use technology.

Our libraries are alive with patrons using our public internet access to look for work. We can point them to free web resources that can sharpen the skills that could help them land a new job.
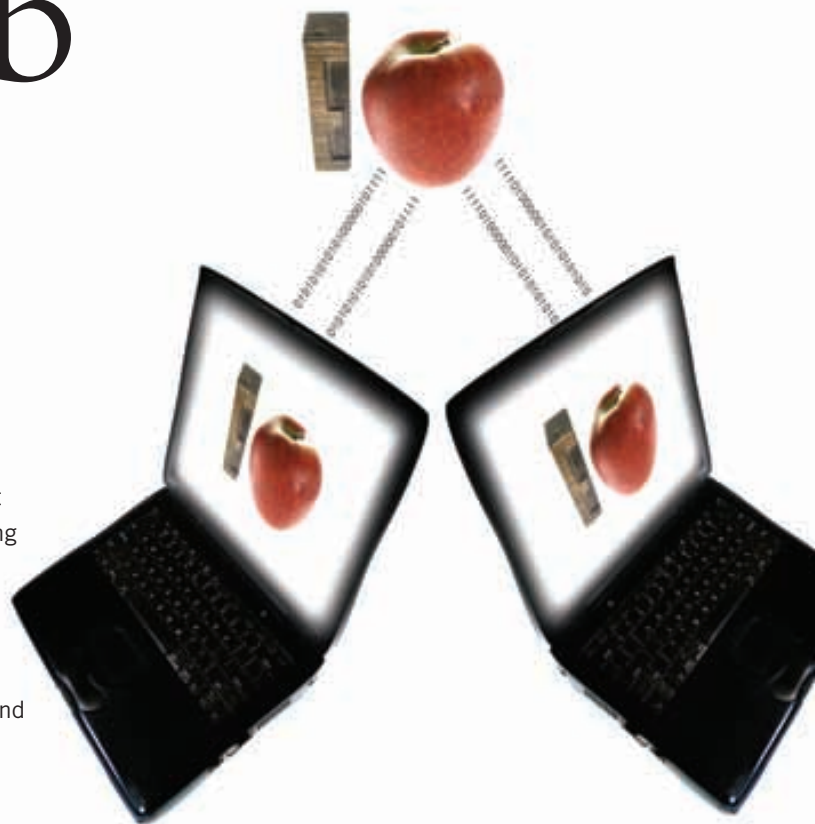
Typing and Ten Key

It cracks me up that, even in the intensely visual realm of the virtual world Second Life [http://secondlife.com], the characters communicate by pausing, twisting, then playing "air keyboard" as their "meat world" counterparts type instant messages to each other. The web seems visual. Still, its primary mode of imparting information remains text-based. In the modern technological workplace, we've all got to know how to type. These sites can help.

TypingWeb
http://www.typingweb.com

Learning to type is never fun, but this program makes it as painless as possible. Register for free to track your progress in this professional-looking set of typing tutorials. Also available with a Spanish-language interface along with six other languages, including Chinese and Korean. iPhone users can download a TypingWeb application to improve texting skills.

Learn2Type
http://www.learn2type.com

Create a free personal account to track your touch-typing success on this venerable site. Learn the AZERTY European keyboard and the DVORAK format, too. Take typing and 10-key tests to earn printable certificates.

Sense-Lang Online Free Touch Typing Program
http://www.sense-lang.org/typing

Learn the QWERTY Standard PC Keyboard or the DVORAK format. Also, take 10-key lessons and play typing games. You even type for fun?!! Now you are a shoo-in for the job.

Free Ten Key Number Pad Course
http://www.typeonline.co.uk/number_pad_lesson1.html

Britain's Dave Bartlett offers eight exercises to get you 10-keying in no time!

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word is the word processing standard in the workplace. Even Open Source programs resemble it and work in a similar way. Our patrons can use these tutorials to help them gain word processing competency.

Microsoft Word 2007 Tutorial

http://www.baycongroup.com/wlesson0.htm

Denise Etheridge wrote this series of clear, methodical lessons about how to use Microsoft Word. She starts from the beginning, giving an overview of what the software is designed to do. She answers the questions that novice users often have, including "Understanding Non-Printing Characters." The company, Baycon Group, maintains other tutorials on this site, too, including ones for Windows Vista, PowerPoint, and even Adobe's Flash.

Basic Use of MS Word

http://www.internet4classrooms.com/on-line_word.htm

Susan Brooks and Bill Byles have written these tutorials to help teachers become proficient with technology. Lessons include "Inserting and editing images in MS Word," "Designing a Newsletter using Microsoft Word," and my favorite: "Part Of a Border Won't Print?"

Essential Microsoft Office 2007

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/columnists/poole/office_tutorials/Lesson1_2007.pdf

In this chapter from his book *Essential Microsoft Office 2007: Tutorials for Teachers*, Bernie Poole, associate professor of education and instructional technology at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pa., offers instructions about how to use

Word 2007. Download other chapters of his book here, too, including "Intro to Access" and the all-important "Mail Merge." Requires the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, available here: http://get.adobe.com/reader.

Microsoft Excel

The spreadsheet is useful for so many things. Knowing how to use one is an essential competency for many businesses. Help patrons get up-to-speed with these online tutorials.

Microsoft Excel Classes

http://www.stmalib.org/compvids.html

St. Mary's County Library in Maryland offers this series of six tutorials to help patrons learn how to use Microsoft's Excel 2007. Works with Windows Media Player. Download the handouts here, too!

MotionTraining Microsoft Excel Tutorials

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L1OVkw2ZQ8&feature=channel

U.K.-based MotionTraining offers a whole channel of 17 excellent Microsoft Excel tutorials absolutely free. This is the first one. A very pleasant way to learn or hone a valuable skill!

Excel Basics #1: What Is Excel?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmSp2-Fa4rg

Mike Gel Girvin, business instructor at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Wash., delves into the mathematical functions available from Excel in this series of Flash videos on YouTube. He links to accompanying instructional workbooks that you can download from his site: http://flightline.highline.edu/mgirvin/excelisfun.htm.

Microsoft Outlook

Outlook is the ubiquitous email program used by business. Love it or hate it, we all must learn to use it. Here's help.

Learn the Net: Step-by-Step: Sending E-Mail Attachments

http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/94attach.htm

So many of our patrons have no idea how to attach a file to an email. From Michael Lerner Productions, this clearly explains a skill essential in today's business settings.

Productivity Portfolio: Outlook

http://www.timeatlas.com/mos/Email/Outlook/

Take advantage of all Outlook has to offer, including calendars, tasks, and notes, with these tutorials from Northern Cali-
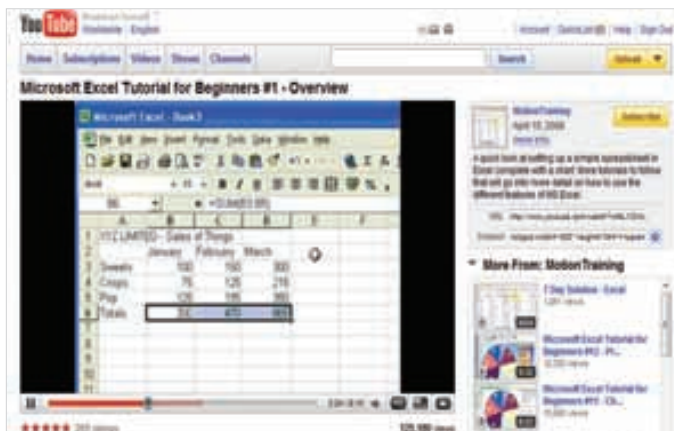
MotionTraining uses video to teach Microsoft Excel.

fornia's Anne Hennegar. Tips include "Building Outlook Distribution Lists," "Recurring vs. Regenerated Tasks," and "Staying Current with Contacts."

TechRepublic: Microsoft Outlook

http://search.techrepublic.com.com/search/microsoft+outlook.html

For more advanced users, TechRepublic offers articles that show how to get the most out of Outlook. Tips include how to re-send a message, how to store sent mail so that it can be easily searched, and how to get around the printing bugs in Outlook 2007.

Microsoft Outlook: The How-To Geek

http://www.howtogeek.com/tag/microsoft-office/#outlook

A computer programmer frustrated with the quality of free computer advice on the web started writing his own back in 2006. The result is this site. Check out his articles about Microsoft Outlook for insights about how to wrangle it better.

A computer programmer frustrated with the quality of free computer advice on the web started writing his own.

Learn Spanish

A recent survey from the U.S. Census Bureau reports that in five states, one in five people are native Spanish speakers. "Nationwide, an estimated 35 million, or about 12.3 percent, *hablan español* at home" ("One-in-Five Speak Spanish in Four States: New Census Bureau Data Show How America Lives" http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/012634.html). For some jobs, it is not only wise to know Spanish, it's a requirement. Use these free resources to start speaking today!

Study Spanish

http://www.studyspanish.com

Users can register for free to take tests and register grades on this handsome site, which offers beginning, intermediate, and advanced lessons. The site also offers a "premium" package for $165 which includes a course on CD called *Camino del éxito* (*Path to Success*) along with audio podcasts.

iTunesU

http://www.apple.com/itunes

Download iTunes for free to gain access to university courses via iTunesU. Listen to podcasts about a variety of issues in Spanish culture and society in *Portales: Beginner's Spanish* from Open University. The Five Colleges of Ohio provides free *Conversations in Spanish*. For fun, listen to *Coffee Break Spanish*, short, practical lessons in conversational Spanish taught by the Radio Lingua Network.

LiveMocha teaches Spanish the graphical way.

LiveMocha

http://www.livemocha.com

Seattle-based LiveMocha offers heavily graphical language courses in return for free registration, along with the opportunity to pair up with native speakers online. For $25, "premium" users also get tutoring and podcasts.

Learn English

It never hurts to brush up on your English skills, particularly if it is not your first language. Here are some helpful sites.

Interesting Things for ESL Students

http://www.manythings.org

Crazy. Angry. Beautiful. These are the first adjectives taught by this site from Charles I. and Lawrence E. Kelly. It looks plain but contains compelling jewels for English-language learners. For example, the Kellys have developed an exercise that uses speeches of Barack Obama along with transcripts to help students listen and learn English. How cool is that?

ESL Café: For Students

http://www.eslcafe.com/students

Californian Dave Sperling has assembled helpful links for students of English, including tests, a site that helps with pronunciation, and a forum.

English Club.com

http://www.englishclub.com

Cambridge's English Club is a handsome, full-service portal for English-language learners. There are resources for teaching as well as learning the language here. Users can join EC for free.

Activities for ESL Students

http://a4esl.org

Here are simple, plain quizzes and exercises offered by teachers to improve the skills of English learners. This is a project of The Internet TESL Journal (iteslj.org).

Advanced English Lessons

http://www.englishpage.com/index.html

Those who wish to sharpen their grammatical skills in English can take tests and read tutorials on the finer points of English gerunds and conditionals.

Writing Tips

Writing clearly and concisely is a basic workplace competency. These sites offer advice about writing workplace communications.

Writing the Basic Business Letter

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/

The Online Writing Lab at Purdue offers more than 200 articles with tips for academic and business writing, including this collection describing how to write a business letter. Find sample letters here, too, that illustrate the proper format.

Business Writing Help

http://oregonstate.edu/dept/eli/buswrite/Business_Writing_Help.html

Donna Shaw of Oregon State University has assembled tutorials for writing in accepted business formats including memos, reports, and letters. "Business writing," she notes, "has some generally accepted practices: writing concisely, using bullets and headings, employing short sentences, creating brief paragraphs, and getting to the point quickly."

Test Your Email IQ

http://www.grammarphobia.com/email.html

Patricia T. O'Conner and Stewart Kellerman offer sensible tips for business email such as making sure to include a subject line, keeping the note short, and checking the spelling and grammar!

Spellchecker: Online Spell Check Form

http://www.spellchecker.net/spellcheck

Users can type or paste paragraphs into this online utility for grammar and spell-checking. There's a thesaurus function here, too, with suggestions for spicing up nouns and verbs.

Telephone Etiquette

Any service sector job will involve giving good customer service, often over the phone. These sites can help brush up public service skills.

Customer Service and Telephone Etiquette

http://www.phonepro.org

Phone Pro's call center trainers wrote this collection of articles with insights for giving good customer service over the phone. We could all use some of that advice!

Phone Skills and Telephone Etiquette Articles

http://www.thephonecoach.com/PhoneEtiquetteArticles.htm

Patrons can improve their all-important phone skills with these articles from The Phone Coach. Articles include "Using the Proper Tone of Voice" and "The Importance of Creating a Great First Impression."

Telephone Etiquette Guide

http://www.fullerton.edu/IT/Services/Telecom/FAQ/etiquetteguide.asp

The Information Technology Department at the California State University at Fullerton offers this comprehensive guide for

Business Skills en Español

Our Spanish-speaking patrons need to train for new jobs, too. Here are some free tutorials to set them on the path to success.

Spanish-language patrons can learn to use the Microsoft Office Suite at AyudaDigital.com.

TypingWeb en Español

http://es.typingweb.com

The Spanish-language version of TypingWeb is as classy and free as its English counterpart. Soon all of our patrons will *mecanografíe bien* (type well).

AyudaDigital.com

http://www.ayudadigital.com/Microsoft_Office/Manuales_tutoriales_office.htm

Visit this page for Spanish-language manuals and tutorials for using the Microsoft Office suite. Here is "*Manual para configurar el Outlook Express contra el correo basura*" (configure Outlook to filter spam), "*Consejos y ayuda para Microsoft Excel*" (advice and help for Microsoft Excel), and even "*Manual para convertir archivos Pdf en Doc*" (converting PDF files to Microsoft Word). Hey, maybe I should read that …

Video-tutoriales sobre Microsoft Office

http://solo-office.blogspot.com

Plug in your headphones to watch these video tutorials on how to use Microsoft Office. Learn "*Formato de parrafo y fuente*" (formatting paragraphs), "*Búsqueda de correos electrónicos en Outlook*" (searching Outlook email), and "*Generar gráficos en Microsoft Excel*" (generating graphics in Excel).

offering good customer service over the phone, along with some ideas about how to de-stress at the end of the day.

Telephone Etiquette at Work

http://www.worketiquette.co.uk/telephone-etiquette-at-work.html

Britain's WorkEtiquette group presents tips for good work telephone practices including answering quickly, being prepared, and "Speak slightly more slowly on the phone than you would if you were having a general face-to-face conversation."

This Is Hard

In their article "30 Things We Know For Sure about Adult Learning," Ron and Susan Zemke write, "Adults seek out learning experiences in order to cope with specific life-chang-ing events — e.g., marriage, divorce, a new job, a promotion, being fired, retiring, losing a loved one, moving to a new city" [http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-3.htm]. Our job-seeking patrons have strong motivation to develop new skills, even if it is difficult for them.

Helping our patrons find the information that they need to learn new job skills has a side benefit for us: it makes our own jobs so much richer! And one more benefit, sometimes we might even use these tools to improve our own performance or those of our colleagues and staff. ■

Irene E. McDermott spends so much time learning new things in the Crowell Public Library in San Marino, Calif., that her boss is beginning to get suspicious!