

Temporary employment can serve as a way to gain relevant knowledge, increase self-confidence, earn money, and perhaps lead to something more permanent. A good way to secure “bridge” or “interim work” is by “temping” through a temporary employment agency, also known as a temp agency.

What is “Temping”?

Temporary employment, also called “temping” or “temp work,” is work done for a set amount of time, ranging from a day to a year or more and averaging about 2-3 months. However, temping is different than other kinds of short-term employment like seasonal or contract positions. Temp workers are hired by temporary staffing agencies that represent companies who need short-term help. Temp work can be done in a variety of industries, and some temp agencies specialize in a certain industry. Assignments commonly involve clerical work such as filing or typing, but may vary widely depending on the industry and the skills of the temp worker. Typically the temp agency will interview and/or screen you, and then offer you assignments that match your skills as well as your schedule requirements.

Important things to know about temping:

- **You work for the temp agency.** Temp workers are employees of the temp agency, not of the businesses where they work. That means you will be paid by the temp agency and receive a W-2 from them for tax purposes.
- **It’s free.** Temp workers do not pay the temp agency any fees.
- **It’s unbenefited.** Temp work does not usually provide any benefits, such as medical insurance.
- **It provides multiple options.** You can be employed by more than one temp agency at a time, but it’s good to be selective. Do careful research to find the temp agency that works best for you (see “Choosing a Temp Agency” below).
- **You may need to keep an open mind.** Temping can require flexibility, as you may be offered an assignment with very little notice, or go some time without an assignment offer. Also, the more flexible you are in terms of pay and schedule, the more likely you will get assignments. You probably won’t get the “perfect” temp position right away, so be prepared to prove your worth and reliability.

Why Temp?

Stay Active During Your Job Search

A successful job search takes significant time, up to nine months in a healthy economy. Temporary employment can help you avoid long gaps in your resume and maintain a source of income while you seek full-time positions.

Gain New Experiences

Temping can provide a window into different workplace environments, industries, and roles. If you’re still figuring out your career plan, this can help you determine what you do (or do not) want to do. You may also be able to learn new skills that you can put on your resume.

Strengthen Your Candidacy

Sometimes companies will recruit temporary employees for permanent positions if you make a good impression. Working through a temp agency can help you get your foot in the door at great companies.

Expand Your Network

Most people find a job through their connections. Temping allows you to meet lots of people in a professional context, including people who might know of other opportunities.

Choosing a Temp Agency

Some questions to consider when choosing a temp agency include:

- What kinds of positions does the agency typically hire for? Are they positions you would be interested in? Sometimes they will post open positions online – review these to get a sense of potential openings.
- What companies does the temp agency work with? Do these include companies you would be interested in learning more about?
- Would it be better to work with a very specialized temp agency, or one that is more generalized? This might depend on your skills, background, and/or interests.
- What kind of experience have other people had with this temp agency?

Portland-Area Temp Agencies

There are many Portland-area temporary employment agencies that UP students and alumni have used which are included in the list below. Conduct your own research to find the right fit. If you are seeking a specialty area, there are several industry specific agencies. The Career Education Center has the *Portland Business Journal Books of Lists* with a list of the top metro-area staffing firms.

- [Aerotek](#)
- [Accounting Principals](#)
- [Ajilon](#)
- [Boly:Welch](#)
- [CampusPoint](#)
- [DePaul Industries](#)
- [Express Employment](#)
- [Kelly Services](#)
- [Northwest Staffing Resources](#)

Additional Short Term Options

Temping is just one short-term option. Some industries, such as retail or tourism, will commonly hire seasonal employees for peak periods. You might also consider public service programs such as AmeriCorps VISTA, Peace Corps, HealthCorps, or Teach for America. The Moreau Center (www1.up.edu/moreaucenter) at the University of Portland can assist you in identifying service opportunities. Learning new skills, volunteering in a field that interests you professionally, thoughtfully investigating graduate school, and effectively networking are other positive steps to take now for the long term.