

Non-Traditional Careers 101

Non-Traditional jobs and careers are ones that have traditionally been held by men. The Department of Labor classifies jobs as non-traditional when women are less than 25% of the workforce in that field.

Benefits

Non-traditional careers offer women many benefits that traditionally female careers don't, including:

Higher Pay – Women in non-traditional careers generally make 20-30% more money than women in traditional careers.

Opportunity for Advancement – Non-traditional careers often have career paths that allow women to quickly move up the ranks, allowing them to earn \$20-\$30 per hour more than their entry level wage.

Better Benefits Packages – Women in non-traditional careers generally have better benefits packages, including health care, vacation and sick leave, pension/retirement plans and life insurance.

Expanding Job Availability – Non-traditional careers are generally in fields that are growing, thus there are many new jobs and positions being created. Also, these fields are losing employees to retirement, creating many job openings.

Job Satisfaction – Many women experience higher job satisfaction in non-traditional careers because they are better able to match their interests and skills with the responsibilities of their jobs.

Non-Traditional Fields:

Detective Architect Barber Machinist
Computer and Office Machine Repairer
Fire Fighter Chef Railroad Conductor
Construction and Building Inspector
Airline Pilot Truck Driver Auto Mechanic
Construction Worker
Small Engine Mechanic Electronic Technician

Challenges

While the benefits often outweigh the challenges in non-traditional careers, there are a few difficulties you may face. However, there are many resources and support programs to help you overcome these difficulties:

Discrimination or Harassment – Many women face discrimination and/or harassment in a non-traditional workplace. However, women are protected from these violations by the law, and often find support networks very helpful.

Hazardous Environments – Non-traditional careers can be in hazardous conditions in which you will need to follow strict safety protocols to protect yourself. You may need to wear special equipment and protective clothing to prevent harm from accidents, extreme weather and injuries.

Family and Friends May Not Be Supportive – Many women find that their family and friends are not as supportive as they could be about their new career choices. Despite this, women can find many other supportive groups and networks to help them continue their careers.

Isolation – With few other women in the non-traditional workplace, many women feel isolated and lonely in their careers. Again, women can find supportive networks and groups with other women experiencing the same situations and environments.

Transportation and Child Care Difficulties – Some non-traditional jobs are at odd times and sites. This can make transportation and child care difficult to find and maintain. Some jobs may require that you have your own reliable transportation.

Three Steps to Finding a Non-Traditional Job

Identify your Interests

Determine your interests – Use assessment tools to learn what you are interested in.

Determine your aptitude – Take aptitude assessment tests to determine your abilities.

Training – Look for training opportunities to prepare yourself for your future career.



Find a Training Program

There are many training programs available for women beginning in non-traditional careers. Most are low cost and some will even pay for your education and/or living expenses. Search for the program that fits your needs and will further advance you in your career.

Training programs are available through your state's Government Employment Sector Office, local high schools, union/employer joint training committees, local community colleges and nonprofit organizations.

Check out your local educational institutions for when their classes start and visit your state's employment office to find out more information about opportunities in your area.

You can also search online for local union and nonprofit programs. Don't forget to check out the local Women Work! organizations by clicking the Local Organizations link at www.womenwork.org.

Getting a Non-Traditional Job

Once you have completed your training and have the skills to succeed in your non-traditional career, begin looking for job openings and opportunities. Keep in touch with any individuals you met during your training program, especially program coordinators, facilitators and instructors. They can be an excellent resource for future job opportunities.

For more advice, visit the Resources section of www.womenwork.org and check out the Women Work! Tip Sheets *Finding a Job*, *Writing Your Resume*, *Writing a Cover Letter* and *The Job Interview*.

GED Prep Classes

Most vocational programs require a high school degree or the equivalent. If you have been out of the classroom setting for a long time, a GED prep class could prepare you to successfully earn your GED.

Pre-Vocational Training Programs

If it has been a long time since you were in a classroom setting or if you are worried that you don't have the skills to perform well in a training program yet, a pre-vocational training program. These programs are designed to give students the skills to help them succeed in a vocational training program. You'll learn to identify tools, read blueprints, gain basic shop skills, learn safety procedures, and gain spatial problem solving skills and condition yourself physically.

Pre-Apprenticeship Training

Apprenticeships are a great way to earn a wage while learning a skill in an industry. See Women Work!'s *Apprenticeship Tip Sheet* for more information on finding and evaluating apprenticeship programs. A pre-apprenticeship program can prepare you to thrive in your apprenticeship.

Spotlight: Information Technologies Careers

Information Technology (IT) is a broad field in managing and processing information. There are many, many jobs in this industry and it is growing rapidly. By 2008, the IT field is expected to need 2,000,000 more highly skilled technology workers. IT is not only a field itself, but exists in most other industries and sectors. Thus, there are many diverse and interesting careers awaiting you in the IT field.

Tips for Finding an IT Career

Job Shadowing – Find someone already in an IT career and follow them through their daily tasks

Informational Interviewing – Interview an individual in an IT field to find the answers to your specific questions and to learn about their experiences in IT

Field Trips to IT Worksites – Visit worksites in your field of interest, observe the day-to-day tasks and environment you could be in

Cooperative Work Experience – Find a work experience that allows you to learn and observe IT fields and jobs while working in the industry

Employer Breakfasts and Brown Bag Lunches – Attend breakfasts and lunches to meet individuals in your field and learn about specific aspects of IT

Technology Career Fairs – Visit career fairs and seminars geared towards IT and learn about jobs and future learning opportunities

Examples of IT Careers

Database Administration /Development – Informs computer how to organize and analyze data

Digital Media – Works with multimedia to produce information and communications

Enterprise Systems Analysis and Integration – Analyzes the organization of the network systems and attempts to better connect the business or organization with their information networks

Software Engineering – Creates the codes and programs run by the network and organization

Technical Support – Provides technical services to customers and users of the network and computers

Technical Writing – Reproduces technical information in a form more easily understood by individuals not trained in IT

Web Development and Administration – Develops and runs the business's/organization's website

Websites About Non-Traditional Careers

www.MentorNet.org

www.ajb.dni.us

www.jobbankusa.com

www.noicc.gov

www.brainbench.org

www.itskill.com

www.go4it.gov

www.computerworld.com/cwi/careers

National Association of Women in Construction – www.nawic.org

Wider Opportunities for Women – www.work4women.org

Non-Traditional Employment for Women – www.new-nyc.org

