

# How to Job Search with a Felony

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Finding a job with a felony is going to be difficult, so you're going to have to prepare yourself for a struggle. Companies that are "felon friendly" are starting to dwindle, and it's becoming increasingly harder for felons to find jobs. But you don't have to tell an ex-offender that, he or she is already dealing with the discrimination on a daily basis.

You have to prepare yourself for a fight. Go into it with a positive outlook, but understand that you're going to encounter a lot of negativity. A lot of HR departments and hiring managers will throw your application out if they see you've checked the "Have you ever been convicted" box. They might not publicly say that they do this, but you and I both know better. There is some more information on how to handle that question box, as well as other resources for finding a job with a felony, on [Exoffenders.net](http://Exoffenders.net).

Avoid the defeatist attitude! This is an extremely common pitfall for ex-offenders, and I see it all the time. You're going to get denied employment. It is absolutely going to happen, barring some incredible stroke of luck. You cannot, under any circumstances, talk yourself into quitting this job hunt. It's so easy to revert back to what we know, which usually in an ex-offenders case, is illegal activities that landed them in trouble in the first place. Always try to stay as positive as you possibly can, even when you feel incredibly overwhelmed and hopeless.

Get into the groove of having a job before you actually have one. I found that waking up at 7 AM and starting my job search was actually really helpful for my overall mood. It makes you feel productive and gives a sense of accomplishment.

Maintain a clean appearance and good hygiene. Not only will you feel better about yourself, but you never know when an opportunity might come up. The last thing you want when you're finding a job with a felony is being called into an interview and you look like you crawled out from under a rock.

From experience, as well as a interviewing people in a wide variety of industries, it seems like an online application usually works like this:

- 1) You submit the application
- 2) Corporate HR evaluates it. Sometimes it is given a score.
- 3) In some cases, a background check is done on the individual. (Usually only for larger companies.)
- 4) If it meets or exceeds a certain score, it is forwarded to a store.
- 5) At the discretion of the hiring manager of the store, you are called in for an interview.

So why is this bad for ex-offenders? Well, a one of the things you can do when finding a job with a felony to increase your chances of getting hired is selling yourself in an interview. With application screening like this, your application might never make it to the actual store and you will never get a face-to-face interview. Please note that not all companies use a procedure like this.

If you're not having any luck with larger companies when you're finding a job with a felony, switch it up. Try to find some smaller businesses. They are usually more lax with doing background checks and hiring ex-offenders. A lot of the work I found, after my initial job at Wendy's when I got out of prison, was with small businesses. If you can wow them at the interview they might be willing to look past your record and give you a shot. There are also online opportunities where you can make money from your home. I'd really suggest doing some research on this

type of work for legitimate work from home jobs before you venture into this. The amount of misinformation, scams, schemes, etc. for work at home opportunities is astounding. If you don't know what you're doing, you could quickly get sucked into one.

Be persistent, and don't be lazy about this. Your chances of finding a job with a felony if you're only filling out an application or two a day, passively looking for work, and not giving it your all is astronomically lower than someone who is giving it a true effort.

## Interview

Appearance is incredibly important when interviewing for a job. Before you even say a word, the potential employer will already have an opinion about you based on your appearance. It's just human nature, we initially judge based on looks and appearance.

**For men** – be freshly shaved; facial hair should be kept to a minimal length, tight, and professional looking. The exception to this is if the facial hair is for religious purposes, in which case there is no need to worry about your facial hair.

**Have a recent haircut** – you don't want to your first impression of you to be that you are disheveled or scraggly looking.

**Do not neglect your hygiene** – Shower the morning before the interview, brush your teeth, flossing is never a bad idea, slap on some cologne/perfume, use deodorant.

**Proper Fit** –. Make sure your outfit fits properly, not too big but definitely not too small. You don't want to walk into an interview with pants that are too short and it looks like you're getting ready for a flood. The exception to this is, of course, religious reasons. If you should not wear pants below the ankles for religious purposes, disregard that.

**Ironing and Cleaning** – Make sure that you're wrinkle-free before walking out your residence. Iron your clothes either night before or that morning, inspect for small spots and stains, minor tears, and other things that may draw the attention of an employer. If there is no other option and you must wear something like this, try to cover it up as best you can. Your shoes should be as clean as you get them. One of the first things I notice about a person is their shoes and anything on their hand and wrist (rings, watches, bracelets.)

Be ready for any questions they may have regarding your experience, willingness to learn, career & life goals, and yes, even your criminal record. Always try to maintain eye contact when during your interview. If you are asked a question, and your eyes wander off to somewhere else in the room while answering, this can be interpreted as being dishonest. The last thing you want is any inclination that you are a dishonest person when you're looking for a job with a felony.

One of the more frequent questions I get is how to explain a felony if asked about it at an interview. Rehearse it.

You'll want to vocalize your skills, talk about what you can bring to the company. Discuss what you do well and how that relates to the position you are applying for. If you don't have that many skills, and the felony question comes up, try to talk about what you learned while incarcerated. For example, say you were a cook in prison, say that you can work extremely well under pressure, work quickly, and deliver results. Try to talk about where you want to go in your life, if you feel you can fit that in without sounding too long-winded.