

Avoiding Underemployment

While no official definition of underemployment exists, most of us consider ourselves underemployed if we feel underpaid, work at a job that doesn't match our level of education, or work only part time when we really want a full-time job. Underemployment does happen, and although we can't control everything in our lives, here are a few strategies to avoid having to take jobs that turn out to be "less" than you expected.

Start Early

Keeping in mind that it's not unusual to take six months or more to get a job, you should start your job search early. Start looking at job postings, applying for jobs, and polishing your job search skills at least six months from your projected date of discharge or retirement. If you wait too long to start your job search, you may feel pressured to take any job just to have some income. That may mean taking one that doesn't fit your skills and experience and that may have a lower salary.

Professional Online Profile

First impressions count, so make it easy for job recruiters to find positive information about you online. In the process of transition, you will probably "rebrand" yourself to meet new career expectations. Since recruiters often search the Internet for job applicants' information, find out what your online information looks like and take action to put your best electronic foot forward.

- Know what recruiters will see about you or about someone who has the same name as yours. Google your name to see what information shows up. You can also go to the [Google alerts page](#) and set up a name alert that sends you a message each time your name appears online.
- Post truthful positive information about yourself online.
- If you have concerns about negative Internet content, you could check out online reputation management services. While some services cost money, others are free or have a free option.
- If you have an online profile on LinkedIn or other social media, make sure that it's complete, accurate, and up to date. Realize that employers may be more likely to invite applicants for an interview if they have a social media profile. Strongly consider setting up a profile if you don't already have one.
- Ask yourself how you want future employers to perceive you. Think through details like your email address and online photos. For example, GoodTimeCharlie@eml.net will create a different impression than Charles.Smith@eml.net. Which email address is

most likely to create a good impression? Also, if you want a civilian job, you may want to post a profile photo that shows how you would look in a nonmilitary setting. Help the employer envision you in the company workspace.

Measure Your Expectations

Have a realistic understanding about the career(s) that you seek. In addition to knowing how well occupations match who you are, think about these tips:

- You may be moving into an entry-level job, so be aware that your actual salary may be lower than some advertised positions. To find out about salaries for specific occupations, go to http://www.careeronestop.org/salariesbenefits/sal_default.aspx. At this site, you can enter the name of an occupation and a state to find out the low, median, and high salaries for the job.
- Use [My Next Move for Veterans](#) to discover if your education matches jobs' requirements. If it doesn't, explore what it would take for you to get the training you need. Then get the coursework or work-based learning that you need to meet the job's requirement.
- You may also find that interesting occupations are increasing in some states but declining in others. If you have flexibility about where you will work, look at [My Next Move for Veterans'](#) Job Outlook section. You may increase the odds of finding the job you want by focusing your job applications in areas where the occupation is growing.
- Be aware that a new career may require a different mindset than your military role did. Review job requirements again when you're invited to interview for a job. What will your employer expect? Plan your behavior ahead of time so that you can show your qualities that best match what the employer needs.
- Find out if you need a license in North Carolina for your work at [Occupations Requiring a License](#).

The bottom line: Know yourself; know the careers that match your skills and interests; and make getting the job you want your next mission!