



# Administrator's Guide

*Directions for Administering and Interpreting the JSKS*

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## Introduction

As society changes, the need to help people find employment becomes a much more important part of the career and employment counseling process (Liptak, 2001). It is a distinct reality that all people must deal with having multiple jobs during their lifetime. Therefore, the ability to deal with job changes in the world of work is perhaps one of the most prevalent challenges that workers face. Helping people learn how to look for work—occupationally displaced adults, youth transitioning from school to work, women reentering the workforce, migrant workers, and the physically and mentally disabled—is one of the most critical aspects of employment counseling.

It is estimated that most people will change jobs about seven times during their lifetime. Therefore, it is now more important to learn job search skills than ever before. Job search knowledge can make a difference in the type of job a person is able to find and the amount of money a person can make. Education and skills remain important, but it is also important to learn skills in finding employment. Farr (2004) suggests that the labor market has changed and that, with these changes, it is likely that people will find themselves unemployed one or more times over their lifespan. He suggests that “getting a job today requires more knowledge of how the labor market works than in the past. While traditional job search methods still work, they have become increasingly less effective for most. Therefore, knowledge of how to look for a job is more important than ever” (p. 2).

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The workplace of today has changed considerably and will continue to do so, thus leaving more people unemployed more than any other time in history. Many of the following changes that have taken place in our society and in the world of work are forcing career counselors and job search specialists to find more effective ways of helping their clients in their search for employment.

**Downsizing**—During the 1990s, downsizing was a common practice among many companies in the private sector and agencies in the public sector. The rate of job loss was higher during the 1990s recovery than it was during the recession of the early 1980s. Gysbers, Heppner, and Johnston (1998) say that “job loss has economic meanings as well as social and psychological meanings” (p. 19).

Unemployment is one of the most stressful events in a person's life. Research indicates that the stress of unemployment can be linked to a variety of psychological disorders, including depression, suicide, alcoholism, and child abuse. These factors then interfere with the job search process, which in turn can cause additional stress for the individual. Winegardner, Simonetti, and Nykodym (1984) have described unemployment as “The Living Death” and say that “unemployment can have a devastating impact on the human psyche, just as the major crises of divorce, the death of a loved one, and facing death itself strongly affect each individual” (p. 149). Their research suggests that the unemployed go through five stages that parallel those confronting individuals facing death or other serious emotional traumas.

**Increasing Technology**—Technology is driving many of the new opportunities in the world of work. Personal computers and the Information Age have made it possible for everyone to have inexpensive access to tons of information and the ability to create it and utilize it from almost anywhere. This increase in technology has made several very evident changes in the workplace:

- No longer do all workers have to go to the company office to work. More work is being outsourced to employees who work from their homes. With the advent of computer and satellite technology, the need for workers to be technologically literate has increased. Workers are now using computer networks and team networks to do a great majority of their work. Eventually workers will rely on television and computers to meet all of their customer service needs.
- Changes are occurring in the way people work. Rifkin (1995) believes that computers will continue replacing jobs to the point that large numbers of people will not have work as we now know it. He suggests that not only will many jobs cease to exist, but that we can expect shorter work weeks, a new social contract, an emphasis on the social economy, more volunteering, and more service to the nonprofit community.
- Robots will continue to replace workers. Robots, which have traditionally been used strictly for factory positions, will continue to replace workers in a variety of industries. Although robotic technology has existed for years, we are rapidly increasing our understanding of the true impact of robots in the workplace.

**Changing Organizations**—In addition to mass downsizing, other major changes have taken place in the workplace. Wages over the last decade have steadily declined for the average worker. In addition, compensation plans have been affected so that employers are paying less toward employee pension plans and health insurance costs and employees are paying more for these benefits. To cut costs and improve efficiency, most major companies have also begun to use temporary workers. The types of temporary work include contractual workers, piece-mill workers, consultants, freelance workers, part-time workers, and outsource workers. Charland (1993) states that labor market estimates in the United States say that at least a third of all job roles are in transition, a third of all vocational-technical schools have become obsolete, and a third of all workers eventually leave their jobs. Transitions in the workplace have become commonplace. Most companies even have career and outplacement services as a part of their human resource departments.

**Globalization**—Another change that has occurred is the decreased number of jobs available for today's workforce. Many workers today have been, or worry about being, laid off from their jobs. Several reasons for this concern among workers include the facts that many companies have streamlined their operations and released unnecessary labor; moved their operations to countries outside the United States due to the low cost of labor there; and replaced their workforce with computers, robots, and other production-efficient technology. Until the mid-1950s, the majority of people worked for one employer their whole life and never had to worry about being downsized.

## Need for the JSKS

The *Job Search Knowledge Scale (JSKS)* is designed to meet the need for a brief assessment instrument to measure a person's knowledge about finding a job. Two assumptions underlying the development of the *JSKS* are that people looking for work have varying levels of job search knowledge and that effective job search programs match their interventions to each client's/student's level of job search knowledge. The *JSKS* is intended for use in comprehensive career guidance programs, middle and high schools, employment counseling programs, rehabilitation counseling programs, college counseling centers, college career and placement offices, and any agency that works with clients or students looking for employment.

Job seekers need to be as knowledgeable about the job search process as possible to find the right opportunities in a competitive job market. In addition, career counselors and job search specialists who operate job search programs need to find ways to help job seekers be more successful in their search for employment. One way to do this is by first gathering information about each client's level of job search knowledge. Then, services and programs can be designed to meet each client's specific career and job search needs.

## Description of the JSKS

The *JSKS* has been designed for easy use. It is simple to take and can be easily scored and interpreted. The *JSKS* contains 60 statements about looking for a job, scoring directions, interpretation guide, answers to the statements, and an action plan for an individual to complete. The statements have been grouped into scales that are representative of a comprehensive job search campaign. The scales on the *JSKS* include

- Identifying Job Leads
- Direct Application to Employers
- Resumes and Cover Letters
- Employment Interviews
- Following Up

The *JSKS* can be administered to individuals or to groups. It is written for individuals at or above the ninth grade reading level. None of the items is gender-specific, and the *JSKS* is appropriate for a variety of audiences and populations.

## Administering the JSKS

The *JSKS* is self-administered, and the inventory is consumable. A pencil or pen is the only other item necessary for administering, scoring, and interpreting the inventory. Begin by distributing one *JSKS* assessment to each person interested in taking the inventory. The first page of the inventory contains spaces for normative data, including Name, Date, Gender, and Age. Each respondent should fill in the necessary information on this page. Read the directions on the first page and for Step 1 while all respondents follow along. Test administrators should ensure that each respondent clearly understands the instructions and the response format. Respondents should be instructed to mark all of their responses directly on the inventory. The *JSKS* requires approximately 20 minutes to complete.

## Completing the JSKS

The *JSKS* uses a series of steps to guide the respondent through the administration of the inventory. Responses are marked as Step 1 of the inventory. Respondents are asked to read each statement and then mark whether they think the statement is true or false. If they think the statement is true, respondents are asked to circle the letter next to that statement in the True column. If they think the statement is false, respondents are asked to circle the letter next to the statement in the False column. Step 2 explains how respondents should total their score for each section. Step 3 helps respondents to profile and to better understand their scores. Step 4 allows respondents to review their answers and provides instruction using job search information and techniques. Step 5 allows respondents to develop a job search action plan and then lists job search resources for additional information.

## Calculating and Profiling Scores for the JSKS

The *JSKS* was designed to be scored by hand. All scoring is completed on the consumable inventory. No other materials are needed to score or interpret the instrument, thus providing immediate results for the test taker.

1. In Step 2, respondents are asked to count their circled B and C answers in each of the five scales on the *JSKS*. These scores will range from 0 to 12 for each of the sections. Respondents then will put that number in the blank box in the TOTAL column for each section on the *JSKS*.
2. Respondents will then put their score for each of the five scales in the Score column next to that scale in Step 3.
3. Respondents will then mark an X on the number that represents their score for each of the five scales in Step 3.

## Understanding Your Scores

The *JSKS* yields content-referenced scores in the form of raw scores. A raw score, in this case, is the total number of correct responses to each of the job search statements. The performance of individual respondents or groups of respondents can only be evaluated in terms of the mean scores on each of the scales.

For the *JSKS*, scores between 0 and 3 indicate that the respondent has little knowledge about that particular job search topic. Scores between 4 and 8 indicate that the respondent has job search knowledge similar to many other people who are looking for a job. Scores between 9 and 12 indicate that the respondent has a great deal of knowledge about that particular job search topic.

Respondents generally have one or more areas in which they score in the little knowledge category. That means that the respondent needs to learn more about that particular aspect of looking for a job. These are the areas for which the respondent should begin gaining additional job search knowledge. The place to start with this exploration is Step 4 on the *JSKS*. Respondents should refer to those sections on which they scored the lowest and read the information provided about looking for a job. Respondents should be told that the numbers at the end of some of the statements in these information sections refer to job search statements in Step 1 of the *JSKS*.

A Job Search Action Plan in Step 5 is provided for respondents to make note of interesting information they learned and also to list job search goals they would like to accomplish. Additional job search resources are also presented.

## Understanding the Job Search Profile

Because the primary objective of this instrument is to help people learn more about their job search strengths and weaknesses, the *JSKS* is organized so that it contains five scales that were deemed critical to any job search campaign. These scales were chosen as representative of a comprehensive job search campaign by three independent judges who were considered job search experts. All three judges rated these job search aspects as critical for respondents to know in order to find a job. The items in each of the job search areas measure the strength of the respondent's knowledge about looking for employment.

### ***The JSKS Basic Scales***

**Section 1: Identifying Job Leads.** This section helps people explore how to identify job leads through both the visible and hidden job markets. High scores indicate that the respondent is knowledgeable in finding employment by making direct contact with employers and networking for a job.

**Section 2: Direct Application to Employers.** This section helps people explore various methods of direct application to employers. High scores indicate that the respondent is knowledgeable about completing employment applications and effectively telephoning employers to find employment.

**Section 3: Resumes and Cover Letters.** This section helps people explore writing and using effective resumes and cover letters. High scores indicate that the respondent is knowledgeable about writing a resume, presenting skills and abilities on a resume, and effectively writing and using cover letters.

**Section 4: Employment Interviews.** This section helps people explore and prepare for employment interviews. High scores indicate that the respondent is knowledgeable about preparing for an interview, performing during an interview, and effectively acting after an interview.

**Section 5: Following Up.** This section helps people explore effective ways of following up after an interview. High scores indicate that the respondent is knowledgeable about gathering additional information about prospective employers, sending follow-up letters, negotiating, and assessing job offers.

### ***Illustrative Case***

| <b>Section</b>                           | <b>Score</b> | 0 | 1 | 2        | 3 | 4 | 5        | 6 | 7        | 8 | 9 | 10       | 11       | 12 |
|--|--------------|---|---|----------|---|---|----------|---|----------|---|---|----------|----------|----|
| <b>1</b> Identifying Job Leads           | <b>2</b>     | . | . | <b>X</b> | . | . | .        | . | .        | . | . | .        | .        | .  |
| <b>2</b> Direct Application to Employers | <b>7</b>     | . | . | .        | . | . | .        | . | <b>X</b> | . | . | .        | .        | .  |
| <b>3</b> Resumes and Cover Letters       | <b>11</b>    | . | . | .        | . | . | .        | . | .        | . | . | .        | <b>X</b> | .  |
| <b>4</b> Employment Interviews           | <b>5</b>     | . | . | .        | . | . | <b>X</b> | . | .        | . | . | .        | .        | .  |
| <b>5</b> Following Up                    | <b>10</b>    | . | . | .        | . | . | .        | . | .        | . | . | <b>X</b> | .        | .  |

The *JSKS* profile above shows the assessment results for a 32-year-old man who has recently been downsized from his job as a mid-level manager in a department store. As can be seen from his profile, the respondent scored in the low range in Identifying Job Leads and in Employment Interviews. These are the two areas in which he needs the most instruction and job search assistance. Since he scored in the high range on Resumes and Follow-Up, he will need less assistance with these aspects of his job search.

### **Research and Development**

This section outlines the stages involved in the development of the *JSKS*. The stages include guidelines for development, item construction, item selection, item standardization, and norm development.

#### ***Guidelines for Development***

The *JSKS* is an inventory designed to measure a person's knowledge about searching for employment. The inventory consists of a series of statements about looking for a job that the average job seeker would know. The *JSKS* was developed to fill the need for a quick, reliable instrument to determine the areas in which respondents have sufficient job search knowledge and those areas in which respondents need additional training in job search techniques. The *JSKS* was developed to meet the following guidelines:

1. The instrument should measure a wide range of job search skills. For the *JSKS*, the five areas include Identifying Job Leads, Direct Application to Employers, Resumes and Cover Letters, Employment Interviews, and Following Up.
2. The instrument should utilize a user-friendly format. The *JSKS* uses a True/False question-answer format that allows respondents to quickly determine the job search areas in which they are deficient.
3. The instrument should be easy to administer, score, and interpret. The *JSKS* utilizes a consumable format that guides the test taker through the five steps to complete the *JSKS*.
4. The instrument should apply to both men and women. Norms for the *JSKS* have been developed for both men and women.
5. The instrument should contain items which are applicable to people of all ages. Norms developed for the *JSKS* show an age range from 18–65.

#### ***Item Construction***

The primary goal was to develop an inventory that measures an individual's knowledge about skills needed to conduct a successful job search campaign. To ensure that the inventory content was valid, the author conducted a thorough review of the literature related to employment counseling and job search training. The author also consulted with individuals providing counseling services in government-funded training programs, rehabilitation counseling programs, and private outplacement and career counseling businesses.

A large pool of items representative of an effective job search campaign was developed and later revised to reflect the five major aspects of a job search as identified in a variety of job search books and workbooks. This enabled the elimination of items that did not correlate well. In developing items for the *JSKS*, the author used language that is currently being used in the job search literature, research, and employment counseling programs. After the items were developed, they were reviewed and edited for clarity, style, and appropriateness for measuring skills needed in a comprehensive job search campaign. Items were additionally screened to eliminate any reference to sex, race, culture, or ethnic origin.

### **Item Standardization**

The *JSKS* was designed to measure a person's knowledge about searching for employment. The author identified adult populations from a variety of places, including prisons, government-funded training programs, and career counseling programs. This population completed drafts of the *JSKS* to gather data concerning the statistical characteristics of each of the items. From this research, a final pool of 60 items was chosen that best represented the five major job search areas—Identifying Job Leads, Direct Application to Employers, Resumes and Cover Letters, Employment Interviews, and Following Up.

This initial research yielded information about the appropriateness of items for each of the scales on the *JSKS*; reactions of respondents concerning the inventory format and content; and reactions of respondents concerning the ease of administration, scoring, and profiling of the *JSKS*. The data collected included coefficient alpha correlations and interscale correlations. The items accepted for the final form of the *JSKS* were again reviewed for content, clarity, and style. Careful examination was conducted to eliminate any possible gender or race bias.

### **Reliability**

Reliability is often defined as the consistency with which a test measures what it purports to measure. Evidence of the reliability of a test may be presented in terms of reliability coefficients and test-retest correlations. Tables 1 and 2 present both types of information. The database consisted of more than 150 adults who were clients of both private and community agencies dedicated to assisting individuals having problems getting employment or in making career changes. As can be seen in Table 1, alpha coefficients for the *JSKS* ranged from .75 to .91. Many of these individuals were retested again after about one month had passed. As can be seen in Table 2, test-retest reliability for the *JSKS* ranged from .79 to .90. Thus, from these results, it was determined that the inventory measures what it sets out to do.

### **Validity**

Validity is often defined as the extent to which a test measures what it purports to measure. Evidence of validity for the *JSKS* is presented in terms of interscale correlations and examination of the means and standard deviations.

Concurrent validity of the *JSKS* can be found in Table 3. This table shows the interscale correlations for an adult sample of more than 100 individuals. The highest correlation is found between Identifying Job Leads and Employment Interviews, and it is only .47. Low intercorrelations of the other scales provide evidence of the individuality of the five areas measured by the *JSKS*.

Table 4 shows the construct validity for the *JSKS*. Sex differences in job search strengths and weaknesses provide some support for the construct validity of the *JSKS*. Females showed greater knowledge in Identifying Job Leads ( $M = 8.18$ ), Direct Application to Employers ( $M = 8.20$ ), and Resumes and Cover Letters ( $M = 8.19$ ), but were less knowledgeable about Employment Interviews ( $M = 7.79$ ) and Following Up ( $M = 7.86$ ).

On the other hand, males were most knowledgeable about Employment Interviews ( $M = 8.53$ ) but needed the most instruction in Identifying Job Leads ( $M = 7.76$ ). Men ( $M = 8.53$ ) tended to be significantly more knowledgeable than women ( $M = 7.79$ ) in Employment Interviews. Overall, men and women looking for a job need the most instruction in the areas of Employment Interviews ( $M = 7.88$ ) and Identifying Job Leads ( $M = 7.95$ ) and tend to be most knowledgeable about Direct Application to Employers ( $M = 8.20$ ).

**TABLE 1**

**Internal Consistency (alpha coefficients)\***

| <i>Scales</i> | <i>Alphas</i> |
|---------------|---------------|
| Scale 1       | .75           |
| Scale 2       | .82           |
| Scale 3       | .90           |
| Scale 4       | .84           |
| Scale 5       | .91           |

\* N = 155 Adults

**TABLE 2**

**Stability (test-retest correlation)\***

| <i>Scales</i> |     |
|---------------|-----|
| Scale 1       | .82 |
| Scale 2       | .79 |
| Scale 3       | .87 |
| Scale 4       | .85 |
| Scale 5       | .90 |

\* N = 100 Adults

+ 1 month after original testing

**TABLE 3**

**JSKS Interscale Correlations\***

| <i>Scales</i> | <i>01</i> | <i>02</i> | <i>03</i> | <i>04</i> | <i>05</i> |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 01            | 1         |           |           |           |           |
| 02            | .35       | 1         |           |           |           |
| 03            | .22       | .40       | 1         |           |           |
| 04            | .47       | .42       | .21       | 1         |           |
| 05            | .36       | .21       | .19       | .26       | 1         |

\* N = 105 Adults

**TABLE 4**

**Means and Standard Deviations for Adults**

| <i>Scales</i>                   | <i>Total (N = 135)</i> |           | <i>Male (N = 65)</i> |           | <i>Female (N = 70)</i> |           |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|
|                                 | <i>Mean</i>            | <i>SD</i> | <i>Mean</i>          | <i>SD</i> | <i>Mean</i>            | <i>SD</i> |
| Identifying Job Leads           | 7.95                   | 1.18      | 7.76                 | 1.10      | 8.18                   | 1.09      |
| Direct Application to Employers | 8.20                   | 1.72      | 8.22                 | 1.83      | 8.20                   | 1.69      |
| Resumes and Cover Letters       | 8.02                   | 1.38      | 8.14                 | 1.33      | 8.19                   | 1.48      |
| Employment Interviews           | 7.88                   | 1.04      | 8.53                 | 1.38      | 7.79                   | 1.00      |
| Following Up                    | 8.02                   | 1.18      | 8.25                 | 1.16      | 7.86                   | 1.48      |

## Reviewers

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