



Career Services Center

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Career Guide



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College Recruitment Media and Jackson State University wish to thank the above participating Corporate Partners for making this publication available to students.

Greetings from the Jackson State University Career Services Center, where our motto is “Uniting Talent with Opportunity”

THE MISSION OF the Jackson State University Career Services Center is to provide career services in a supportive and proactive manner for the Jackson State University community; to include information on career choices, graduate and professional school, internship, and employment opportunities. The Center also provides effective and efficient services to employers through recruitment programs and activities

RESOURCES AND SERVICES:

- **Career Coaching** to assist students in developing realistic and innovative career goals.
- **Job Search Skills Development** includes providing assistance with resume and cover letter writing and the interview process.
- **Tigers2Work** is a web-based recruiting system that allows JSU students and alumni to electronically submit resumes to employers, search for internships, part-time, student employment and full-time job opportunities, and search for employer information. Visit <https://jsums-csm.symplicity.com> to learn more.
- **TypeFocus** is an online career development program that assesses student's personality, interests and values to help them choose careers that match their natural strengths. Visit <https://www.typefocus.com> to learn more.
- **InterviewStream** is an online mock interviewing site that allows students to practice their interviewing skills. Students can see and hear themselves responding to real interview questions before being in front of an employer. Visit <https://jacksonstate.interviewstream.com> to learn more.

- **What Can I Do With This Major?** This resource helps students connect majors to careers. They also learn about the typical career areas and the types of employers that hire people with each major, as well as strategies to make them a more marketable candidate. Visit <http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/> to learn more.
- **On-Campus Interviews** accommodate numerous employers annually to conduct interviews with students for internship, and full-time career opportunities.

ANNUAL SPECIAL EVENTS:

- **Graduate and Professional Schools Day** is a service to junior, senior, and graduate students who contemplate further study upon their graduation from Jackson State. This event occurs every September.
- **Fall & Spring Career Fair** are events designed for all Jackson State University students/alumni and seeks to familiarize them with various professions and career fields through face-to-face interaction with representatives of the private and public sector job markets. These events occur every October and February.
- **Teacher Recruitment Day** is designed to allow school systems from across the nation to interview prospective Teacher Education graduates for job openings in their respective schools. This event occurs every Spring (March or April).
- **Business Etiquette Dinner** is an event which students are served a five course meal while learning proper table manners and appropriate behavior in a business setting. This event occurs every February.



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President, Jackson Banking Center



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Making Your Career Center Work for You

MANY STUDENTS GO through all four years of college without ever setting foot in their school's career services office. Yet, outside of the academic realm, job seekers will pay hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for the very same services that are included free with the cost of tuition.

The mission of career center practitioners is to teach skills and provide services that will facilitate the career development and job search process, ranging from assessing your abilities to negotiating employment offers. Don't overlook this opportunity; it could mean passing up the job of a lifetime.

Develop Relationships

Find a career center counselor/advisor and get to know him or her. Try to meet with your counselor at least several times throughout your career development process. Appointments are a great way to stay motivated and to accomplish career-related tasks.

A counselor will listen to your concerns and provide objective advice. You can bounce ideas off him or her, which will help you think through your options. Furthermore, when unique job opportunities come in, counselors often alert students who they know well and think might be a good fit with the position. Remember, the more you share about your skills and your goals with the staff, the better they will be able to assist you.

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will be able to assist you.**

Attend Programs

Many career center practitioners spend the bulk of their time planning events for students. From mock interview days and networking nights to resume workshops and career fairs, at any given time there may be a number of programs going on that can assist you. Make sure you are aware of what's taking place. Find the event calendar, whether it is online, in the paper, or through an email. As you attend programs, ask thoughtful questions to make the most of what you are learning.

Don't Be a Stranger

Your relationship with the career center doesn't have to end the day you don your cap and gown. Many centers offer services for alumni similar to those for students. If you haven't found a job or even formed a plan by graduation, you still might be able to meet with counselors/advisors, use job listings and/or computers and attend programs. Check with the career center to see what is available and what time limits apply.

Programs and Services

In addition to these tips, it's helpful to understand more about a career center's numerous services. These programs and offerings may include:

Job Listings and Recruiting Programs

Virtually all career centers have job listings maintained in-house or by professional online services. Employers can post positions specifically for your individual college. Furthermore, many students will be able to take advantage of on-campus recruiting programs, where employers collect student resumes and conduct on-campus interviews for various job openings.

Career Fairs

The beauty of career fairs is that they bring employers to you. Often held in a large venue, you can browse their available positions, talk with them informally, and drop off resumes. Fairs may be held up to several times a year, focusing on different types of positions, such as internships or nonprofit jobs.

Internship Programs

Internships are the most valuable way to try out different career fields and gain hands-on experience while you are still a student. You can build your resume, learn the ropes, and maybe even get academic credit. You might also pave the way to a full-time position after graduation.

Workshops

Career center workshops cover skills ranging from writing an effective cover letter to honing your interview performance. Not only can you get pertinent advice from career center staff and other workshop presenters, but you will also benefit greatly from being in a group environment with your peers.

Alumni Networks

Many schools offer students access to alumni contacts in various career fields. These graduates have volunteered to serve as a resource for information and advice. This can be one of the most helpful ways to learn about different industries, and can help you get your foot in the door.

Mock Interviews

When it comes to interviewing, practice makes perfect. The experience of having a simulated interview with a staff member can calm nerves, enhance performance, teach you how to answer tough questions, and prevent you from making big mistakes.

Resume and Cover Letter Critiques

In addition to the assistance offered during individual appointments, many offices hold specific drop-in hours where a staff member can provide a quick resume or cover letter critique.

Written by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, Director, Industry Relations, Tisch Center, New York University.

Tigers2Work

What Is It?

Tigers2Work is the Career Services Center's on-line manager system that students and alumni use to get and stay connected to our office. **Tigers2Work** is the online posting hub for all part-time, full-time, and internship opportunities. Once registered you have access to thousands of opportunities and employer contact information. Other resources available on **Tigers2Work** include:

- A calendar of events featuring upcoming graduate school and career fairs, professional development seminars, information sessions, and on-campus recruitment interviews;
- Career Resources including Career Explorer, Career Finder and Resume Builder; and
- Employer Directory and Contact Directory

How Do I Use It?

- To register you will need a valid professional email address.
- Go to www.jsums.edu/careers
- Click on "Tigers2Work"
- Click on "for students/alumni"
- Click on "Register" (Register for a new account)
- Use your valid email account for your username
- The registration password is **jsums**
- Complete the student registration form ("Main" and "Profile") and click submit.
- You will automatically be taken to your new personal **Tigers2Work** homepage.
- **IMPORTANT: After registering with *Tigers2Work*, a link will be emailed to you. Click on the link, and create your new personal password to log-in to your *Tigers2Work* account.**

All fields in red must be completed. On the right side of the screen is a completion box. Completed items are indicated by a green check. Items not yet completed are indicated in red.

Your Profile and Why It's Important

The information you put into your profile qualifies you for access to jobs and interviews. Be sure to update your profile throughout your academic career, making note of changes in your classification, GPA, and academic status.

How do I apply for jobs and sign up for interviews?

- Log-in to your account
- Go to "Find a Job" and click on "Jobs I Qualify For"
- Click on "Campus Interviews" for on-campus recruitment interviews

Writing and Uploading a Resume

If you have not developed a resume or wish to view some tips on resume design, refer to the Career Services Center Guide. Your resume must be created and uploaded as a Word document.

Now you're ready to upload your resume. Log-in to your **Tigers2Work** account and follow the instructions listed:

- Click on "documents" on the tab bar.
- Next, click on the "Pending Documents" tab and once there click "add new". You will see a "New Document" page.
- Here you will give your resume a label name. (Upload resume only, no cover letter)
- Check "Resume" for Document Type.
- Go to the "File" box and click "Browse" to locate your document on your computer.
- Once you have located the document, highlight the document you are going to upload and click open.
- Click "Submit. You will then receive a message that states: "Pending documents are awaiting approval by career center staff prior to being available for submission to employers."
- You will receive an email notification when resume is approved.

On-Campus Interviewing Process

Pre-selected Status

Qualified candidates submit their resumes prior to the resume submission end date for company review and selection. Pre-selected candidates sign up for interview times on a first-come, first-served basis. If you have been pre-selected, you will receive an email and notification on your *Tigers2Work* homepage.

How to Set Up an Interview

Once you have clicked on the "Land An Interview" tab, click on "Campus Interviews I Qualify For." Once you find a job description that matches your criteria, click on the Apply button and submit the appropriate document.

If you have been selected by the company for an interview, you will be notified via email and/or in *Tigers2Work* homepage to select an interview time. On the Home screen, click on the Notification link; this will direct you to the position information page where you will have the option to select an interview time. Click on the Schedule Interview tab within the Interview Requests tab to select your interview time. Submit to finalize; submitted interview time requests will appear under the Scheduled Interviews tab.

In the Interview section, you will also click on the Interview Requests tab to view a list of the positions you've applied for and the status of your request.

To change your interview time or cancel please contact the Career Services Center at 601.979.2477. Interviews should be cancelled no later than 48 hours prior to the date of the interview.

If you miss an interview, the "No Show Policy" will be enforced.

No-Show Policy

On-Campus Interviews are considered professional appointments between you and an organization. It is imperative that you attend as scheduled. Students who fail to appear for a scheduled interview show a lack of professionalism. A no-show gives employers a negative impression of you, the JSU Career Services Center, and Jackson State University.

A "NO-SHOW" is defined as:

- Failing to come to a scheduled interview.
- Canceling an interview without giving 2 full business days prior notice

The only exception is if you call in sick. You must have a note from the JSU Health Center or your physician to not be considered a "NO-SHOW."

First No-Show

You must provide the Career Services Center a letter of apology within 3 business days of missing the interview. The letter should be addressed to the company/agency of the interview you missed. Your *Tigers2Work* access will be suspended until your letter is received in the Career Services Center.

Second No-Show

You will not be allowed to participate in on-campus interviews scheduled by the Career Services Center. As a "NO-SHOW," you have denied another student an opportunity to interview with the employer and possibly get a job offer. You will continue to have access to *Tigers2Work*, but your on-campus interview privileges through the Career Services Center will be permanently suspended.

Creating a Plan

A College Timeline: How to Plan for Career Success

Freshmen—Question

- ☐ Explore your interests and abilities through academic courses
- ☐ Utilize self-assessment tools through your career services office
- ☐ Consider volunteer positions to help you build your resume and broaden your experience
- ☐ Collect information on internships, cooperative education and other paid work experiences
- ☐ Learn about any cooperative education or internship programs offered through your career services office
- ☐ Join university organizations that will offer you leadership roles in the future
- ☐ Attend job fairs to gather information on potential careers and employers
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the services and resources available at your career services office
- ☐ Visit each social media profile you have, and either edit your content or your privacy settings. It is time to put your professional foot forward
- ☐ Visit your career services office website
- ☐ Attend a resume workshop and create a first draft of your resume

Sophomores—Research

- ☐ Choose a major that you will enjoy studying
- ☐ Obtain an internship/field experience or other experience-based education, such as cooperative education
- ☐ Take on more responsibilities in extracurricular activities
- ☐ Explore at least three career options available to you through your major
- ☐ Attend job fairs and employer information sessions that relate to your major
- ☐ Identify organizations and associations in your interest areas for shadowing opportunities

Juniors—Making Decisions

- ☐ Complete at least five informational interviews in careers you want to explore
- ☐ Shadow several professionals in your field of interest
- ☐ Find out more about career opportunities related to your major
- ☐ Attend job fairs and employer information sessions that relate to your interests
- ☐ Narrow your career interest areas
- ☐ Research potential organizations
- ☐ Talk to recent graduates in your major about the job market and potential employers.
- ☐ Obtain an internship or other practical career experience
- ☐ Meet with a career counselor to have your resume updated
- ☐ Participate in seminars or workshops offered by your career services office to learn more about job search strategies such as networking and interviewing skills

Seniors—Job Search

- ☐ Stay up-to-date with the your career services office calendar and participate in on-campus recruiting activities
- ☐ Participate in interviewing skills seminars/workshops or a mock interview program
- ☐ Develop a list of prospective employers with contact names and addresses from organizations you are interested in pursuing
- ☐ Determine your career-related strengths and skills; determine what you have to offer an employer
- ☐ Meet with your career counselor to have your updated resume reviewed
- ☐ Visit job listing websites
- ☐ Draft a cover letter that can be adapted for a variety of employers and have it reviewed
- ☐ Research information on realistic salary expectations
- ☐ Go on employment interviews, evaluate job offers and accept one!

Adapted with permission from Career Services at Virginia Tech.

DISCOVER THE PERFECT CAREER FOR YOU BASED ON YOUR PERSONALITY STRENGTHS.



TypeFocus Careers is an online career program that will assess your personality and help you choose careers that match your natural strengths. Along the way, you will discover a lot more about yourself so you can answer the questions everyone who is searching for a good career must ask:

- Who am I . . . really?
- Where am I going?
- How will I get there?

Find out how you fit into the career puzzle—create a career plan that really works for you.

How to Get Started:

1. Go to www.typefocus.com
2. Complete the required information
3. Access Password is: jsu77

If you have questions, contact the Career Services Center at 601-979-2477.

Career Exploration

Consider these action items to guide you on your career voyage!

Self Assessment

Self assessment is about doing a realistic appraisal of you and is the starting point for career planning. During this step you will:

- Identify your interests, skills, values, and personality type.
- Determine how these important factors influence your career decision(s) and satisfaction.
- Learn those areas in which you need to improve, gain knowledge, or experience.

Career Research

Take the time to gather information about various career fields and academic options that complement your self assessment results. Thorough research leads to quality decisions.

Decision Making

Self assessment and research provides the foundation for you to compare and contrast your options and choose the majors/careers that are a "best fit" for you at this time.

Goal Setting and Action Plans

Define your career goal(s) and set a realistic action plan with the steps and deadlines to meet your goal(s).

Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. Make certain you include some type of career related experience!



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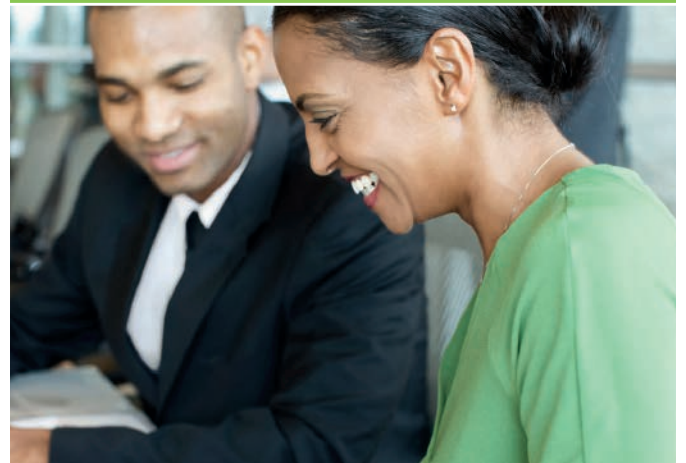
Every decision we make has consequences. We choose what we put into our lakes and rivers. We choose what we release into the air we breathe. We choose what we put into our bodies, and where we let our children run and play. We choose the world we live in, so make the right choices. Learn what you can do to care for our water, our air, our land and yourself at earthshare.org. Earth Share supports more than 400 environmental and conservation organizations that impact you every day.

Visit us at earthshare.org



Earth Share

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The Top Ten Pitfalls in Resume Writing

1. **Too long.** Most new graduates should restrict their resumes to one page. If you have trouble condensing, get help from a technical or business writer or a career center professional.
2. **Typographical, grammatical or spelling errors.** These errors suggest carelessness, poor education and/or lack of intelligence. Have at least two people proofread your resume. Don't rely on your computer's spell-checkers or grammar-checkers.
3. **Hard to read.** A poorly typed or copied resume looks unprofessional. Use a plain typeface, no smaller than a 12-point font. Asterisks, bullets, underlining, boldface type and italics should be used only to make the document easier to read, not fancier. Again, ask a professional's opinion.
4. **Too verbose.** Do not use complete sentences or paragraphs. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible. *A*, *an* and *the* can almost always be left out. Be careful in your use of jargon and avoid slang.
5. **Too sparse.** Give more than the bare essentials, especially when describing related work experience, skills, accomplishments, activities, interests and club memberships that will give employers important information. Including membership in the Society of Women Engineers, for example, would be helpful to employers who wish to hire more women, yet cannot ask for that information.
6. **Irrelevant information.** Customize each resume to each position you seek (when possible). Of course, include all education and work experience, but emphasize only relevant experience, skills, accomplishments, activities and hobbies. Do not include marital status, age, sex, children, height, weight, health, church membership, etc.
7. **Obviously generic.** Too many resumes scream, "I need a job—any job!" The employer needs to feel that you are interested in that particular position with his or her particular company.
8. **Too snazzy.** Of course, use good quality bond paper, but avoid exotic fonts, colored paper, photographs, binders and graphics. Electronic resumes should include appropriate industry keywords and use a font size between 10 and 14 points. Avoid underlining, italics or graphics.
9. **Boring.** Make your resume as dynamic as possible. Begin every statement with an action verb. Use active verbs to describe what you have accomplished in past jobs. Take advantage of your rich vocabulary and avoid repeating words, especially the first word in a section.
10. **Too modest.** The resume showcases your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification or arrogance.

The Three Rs

The three Rs of resume writing are **Research, Research, Research**. You must know what the prospective company does, what the position involves and whether you will be a fit, before submitting your resume. And that means doing research—about the company, about the position and about the type of employee the company typically hires.

Research the company. Read whatever literature the company has placed in the career library. For additional information, call the company. Ask for any literature it may have, find out how the company is structured and ask what qualities the company generally looks for in its employees. Ask if there are openings in your area, and find out the name of the department head and give him or her a call. Explain that you are considering applying to their company, and ask for their recommendation for next steps. Thank that person for the information, and ask to whom your resume should be directed.

The internet is another key tool to utilize in your research. Most companies have websites that include information regarding company background, community involvement, special events, executive bios or even past annual reports. Be sure to take advantage of the internet during your job search.

Research the position. The more you know about the position, the better able you will be to sell yourself and to target your

resume to that position. If possible, interview someone who does that same job. In addition to finding out the duties, ask if there is on-the-job training, whether they value education over experience (or vice versa) and what kind of turnover the department experiences. Ask what they like about the position and the company; more important, ask what they don't like about it.

Finally, research yourself. Your goal is not just to get a job. Your goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. After you find out all you can about the company and the position, ask yourself honestly whether this is what you really want to do and where you really want to be. The odds are overwhelming that you will not hold this position for more than two or three years, so it's not a lifetime commitment; however, this first job will be the base of your lifetime career. You must start successfully so that future recommendations will always be positive. Furthermore, three years is a long time to spend doing something you don't like, working in a position that isn't challenging or living somewhere you don't want to live.

One last word of advice: Before you go to the interview, review the version of your resume that you submitted to this employer. The resume can only get you the interview; the interview gets you the job.

Power Verbs for Your Resume

THE FOLLOWING LISTS are divided into categories to facilitate your ability to identify some great, active verbs to make your resume stand out. Begin each of your descriptive lines with a power verb. Keep the tenses consistent using past verbs for past experiences and present verbs for the current ones.

Working with PEOPLE:

Communication

Address
Clarify
Collaborate
Communicate
Compose
Correspond
Demonstrate
Document
Edit
Entertain
Exhibit
Explain
Express
Illustrate
Interpret
Interview
Investigate
Lecture
Perform
Plan
Present
Promote
Proofread
Read
Relate
Relay
Report
Review
Revise
Speak
Summarize
Survey
Translate
Transcribe
Write

Teaching/Advising

Advise
Correct
Counsel
Demonstrate
Display
Encourage
Enlist
Ensure
Grade
Guide
Influence
Instruct

Introduce
Lecture
Mentor
Program
Provide
Rate
Steer
Suggest
Support
Teach
Test
Train
Tutor

Public Relations

Advertise
Advocate
Attend
Coordinate
Convince
Dispense
Disseminate
Distribute
Fundraise
Influence
Lobby
Persuade
Poster
Publicize
Publish
Recruit
Screen
Sell
Service
Target

Interpersonal Relations

Acclimate
Accommodate
Adapt
Answer
Anticipate
Assure
Bargain
Care
Coach
Collaborate
Confer
Confront
Consult
Converse
Critique
Develop

Encourage
Familiarize
Form
Foster
Fulfill
Implement
Inform
Interact
Intervene
Join
Listen
Litigate
Mediate
Model
Motivate
Negotiate
Participate
Provide
Recommend
Reconcile
Rehabilitate
Represent
Resolve
Share
Suggest
Treat

Administrative/ Management

Accelerate
Accomplish
Achieve
Act
Administer
Allocate
Approve
Assign
Assess
Attain
Benchmark
Chair
Commend
Compromise
Consolidate
Control
Delegate
Direct
Enforce
Entrust
Expedite
Govern
Head
Hire

Improvise
Initiate
Institute
Judge
Lead
Maintain
Manage
Moderate
Monitor
Officiate
Order
Oversee
Prescreen
Preside
Prioritize
Produce
Prohibit
Refer
Regulate
Run
Start
Streamline
Strengthen
Supervise

Working with DATA:

Research/Analysis

Acquire
Analyze
Classify
Collate
Collect
Compile
Conduct
Data
Deliver
Detect
Determine
Discover
Dissect
Evaluate
Explore
Examine
Formulate
Gather
Identify
Inspect
Investigate
Locate
Name

Obtain
Pinpoint
Prepare
Prioritize
Research
Specify
Survey
Test
Trace
Track
Verify

Numbers/Finance

Abstract
Account
Add
Appraise
Audit
Budget
Calculate
Collect
Compute
Decrease
Determine
Divide
Enter (data)
Estimate
File
Finance
Formulate
Increase
Insure
Inventory
Invest
Market
Maximize
Minimize
Multiply
Process
Project
Purchase
Record
Reduce
Solve
Quantify

Organization

Appraise
Apply
Arrange
Balance
Catalog
Categorize

Power Verbs for Your Resume *continued*

Connect
Coordinate
Define
Edit
Establish
Facilitate
File
Group
Issue
Modify
Orchestrate
Organize
Overhaul
Place
Prepare
Program
Qualify
Reorganize
Rewrite
Schedule
Set
Sort

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Design
Enlarge
Format
Improve
Install
Fix
Function
Manufacture
Navigate
Operate
Propose
Refinish
Renovate
Repair
Restore
Update
Upgrade

Creating/Generating

Construct
Landscape
Produce
Shape
Utilize

Working with IDEAS:

Development
Adjust

Compose
Develop
Devise
Guide
Implement
Innovate
Invent
Make

Creating/Generating

Activate
Complete
Conserve
Contract
Create
Discover
Draft
Draw
Engineer
Execute
Expand
Generate
Inaugurate
Launch
Modify
Mold
Reconstruct
Synthesize
Transform
Unite

Universal
Act
Apply
Anticipate
Change
Check
Contribute
Cover
Decide
Define
Diagnose
Effect
Eliminate
Emphasize
Establish
Facilitate
Forecast
Found
Give
Navigate
Offer
Perform
Propose
Refer
Referee
Register
Reinforce
Resolve
Respond
Retrieve

Save
Select
Serve
Set
Simplify
Study
Take
Travel
Use
Win

Weak Verbs

Do Not Use

Aid
Assist
Deal
Enhance
Gain
Handle
Help
Learn
Receive
Seek Out
Set Up
Tolerate
Understand

Bullets Formula

Skill Statements

POWER VERB (SKILL) + Demonstrated Accomplishment/Contribution

Consider the following tips:

Purpose

- Performed gear mapping for transmissions *to optimize shift patterns, fuel economy and available power*

Method

- Collected quantitative infrared imaging *using a high speed infrared camera*

Result

- Designed and implemented latches for condensation vents to reduce water leakage *creating a safer work environment*

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Developing a Winning Resume

A RESUME IS a written document that is used to highlight the skills, contributions and experiences that represent the personal brand you want to portray to potential employers to secure an interview.

Resume Types

Decide the resume style you prefer to use, based on the message you want to convey to employers:

- *Chronological* – Highlight information starting with the most recent. Prioritize your sections so you start with the most important first!
- *Functional* – Highlight information in categories based on commonly grouped skills. This type is useful for those with gaps in experience or a wide variety in work history, but can demonstrate similar skills.

Format

Keep the following rules of thumb in mind when preparing the resume:

- *Margins* – Top: 0.8" - 1"; Sides and Bottom: 0.5" - 1"
- *Font Size and Style* – 10-12; simple, readable fonts (e.g., Calibri, Georgia, Arial, Cambria, Times New Roman)
- *Balance* – white space and text space
- *Length* – Undergraduate level - 1 page; Graduate and Ph.D. - 2 pages; Education, Nursing and Medicine can have more than 1 page
- *Templates* – Refrain from using them! Use resume samples as a guide to create your own document, unique to your skills and qualifications
- *Order* – Heading, Objective (if included) and Education are listed first, in that order

Content

The makeup of your document should be deliberate and powerful:

- *Prioritize* – Top two-thirds of the page receive priority when highlighting key categories and skills
- *Own the Order* – Highlight the most relevant categories first; Experience does not always have to follow Education

Heading

Highlight your personal contact information in a way that makes sense for your spacing needs. Include:

- Name, which should be bold and in larger print (14-20 font size)
- Permanent and/or current addresses (listing both signals a transition, e.g., graduation)
- One professional email address without the hyperlink
- One reliable telephone number
- You do not need to label contact information e.g., Email: somebody@jsums.edu, just indicate: somebody@jsums.edu

Objective

This optional statement should focus on your desired job title, if you choose to have one:

- Use phrases such as "To obtain an internship in accounting or finance" or "Seeking full-time employment in engineering design, research or development"
- You can also include specialized interests/areas of focus to help distinguish yourself
- It is not necessary or expected that you highlight your skills or to extensively express what you want to gain from the experience in this section

Education

- Name of institution and location, e.g., Jackson State University, Jackson, MS
- Official name of degree and major, e.g., Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering
- Concentrations, Minors- separate line, e.g., Minor: Organizational Leadership
- Month and year of graduation (future or past); you *do not* need to indicate expected/anticipated graduation, just indicate month and year, e.g., May 2014
- Optional overall and/or major GPA and scale, e.g., 3.59/4.0
- Omit high school information, unless 1) freshman or 2) significant or related to field

Developing a Winning Resume *continued*

Experience

Highlight employment, volunteer and school experiences that relate to your desired objective:

- Potential titles for this section: Experience, Professional Experience, Related or Relevant Experience
- Use the core four- company name, position held, month/year of start and finish, city and state. Country, if not in U.S.
- Emphasize relevant skills, specific accomplishments and/or contributions
- Bullets formula= Power Verb (Skill) + Demonstrated Accomplishment and/or Contribution
- Use important keywords and hot topics relevant to your field
- Do not mention names of previous supervisors or advisors (Reference Page Only)

Related or Relevant Courses

- List atypical courses to emphasize exposure to related subjects/skills
- Consider courses taken as part of concentration, minor and/or specialized electives
- Do not include required courses for your degree as they do not distinguish you from other candidates

Skills

- Potential titles to consider: Technical/Computer Skills, Language Skills
- Acceptable to categorize or list together if they are all in the same category; just list them, e.g., Adobe Illustrator
- Microsoft Word and PowerPoint are considered universal skills so you don't need to list them. Only mention Microsoft if you have extensive knowledge of additional Microsoft Office programs.
- Indicate your level of proficiency and be sure you can use them "on the job"
- Skills like communication and teamwork should be highlighted within the context of your experiences; use your bullet statements to provide evidence of these skills

Additional Sections

Depending on your background, you may want to add additional sections to your resume:

Most commonly listed after Education:

- Study Abroad
- Certifications or Licensure

Experience sections:

- Leadership (very impressive to employers!)
- Activities or Extracurricular Involvement or Student Organizations
- Honors or Awards
- Community Service or Volunteer

- Professional Affiliations

- Notable Projects or Class Projects or Projects

Most commonly used for a CV, but could be used for a resume if they are relevant to your career objective:

- Research
- Teaching
- Publications
- Presentations

Do Not Include

- Photographs, marital status, salary requirements, age, race, national origin, visa status or references

References Available Upon Request

- References *should not* be listed on a resume. An employer typically only asks for them during or after an interview
- On a separate page, list 3-5 references, centered—name, position, company, address, phone and email
- Copy and paste the same heading from your resume to the top of the references page

Adapted with permission from Purdue University's 2014-2015 Career Planning Handbook.

Resume Examples

NAME (Font Size for name only = 14 or 15)

(Font Size for all other information = 12)

Present Address
Jackson State University
Post Office Box 5555
Jackson, MS 39217
(601) 979-0000

Permanent Address
100 Pecan Street
Memphis, TN 44444
(901) 555-5555
Professional E-mail Address

OBJECTIVE: Cultural Events Specialist

EDUCATION: Jackson State University
College of Liberal Arts
Bachelor of Arts
Major: Art
GPA: 3.5

Jackson, MS
May 20XX

EXPERIENCE: Mississippi Museum of Art
TOUR GUIDE

- Escort groups on tours throughout the gallery
- Plan and organize individual and group tours

Jackson, MS

Summer 2014 YMCA
INTERN

- Planned cultural events for children and youth
- Organized arts and crafts activities to develop creative skills

Memphis, TN

Summer 2013 Jackson State University
WORK-STUDY ASSISTANT

- Assisted the secretary in performing daily clerical duties
- Answered the phones, transferred calls, and handled messages
- Assisted parents, students, and staff in a timely manner

Jackson, MS

HONORS & ACTIVITIES:

Dean's List
Full JSU Academic Scholarship
President, Art Club

President's List
Arts of Humanities Council
SGA Representative, 20XX-20XX

SKILLS: Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access
dBase, and the Internet

REFERENCES: Available upon request

Note: You can use a different format, but be sure to include all vital info.

SAMPLE RESUME
Address • Madison, MS 39130 • Phone • email

OBJECTIVE: A position in the field of accounting.

EDUCATION: Jackson State University
College of Business (AACSB Accredited)
Bachelor of Business Administration
Major: Accounting
Overall GPA: 3.3

Jackson, MS
May 2013

EXPERIENCE: Therapy First Outpatient Rehabilitation Clinic
FRONT DESK RECEPTIONIST

- Operate multi-line phone system
- Enter data in spreadsheets and databases
- Assist physical therapist with patient check-in and scheduling

Jackson, MS
October 20xx-Present

Comcast
ACCOUNTING INTERN

- Performed budget analysis
- Performed cost allocation for expense related items
- Assisted with changing phone extensions in AVAYA PBX
- Edited Data using Microsoft Sharepoint
- Performed daily input data entry duties
- Maintained records retention
- Performed utilities spreadsheet, uploads and reconciliations
- Reconciled bank statements
- Audited procurement card statements

Jackson, MS
Summer 20xx

Jackson State University Athletic Department
STUDENT ASSISTANT

- Assisted Director in coordinating events for the various on-campus sports
- Produced and provided credentials and passes for each sporting event
- Operated a multi-line telephone system
- Responsible for office filing system

Jackson, MS
September 20xx - May 20xx

HONORS & ACTIVITIES:

Dean's List Scholar
Who's Who Among Colleges and Universities
Accounting Society – Treasurer
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program
W.E.B. DuBois Honors College
HORNE College Capstone Program Participant
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mississippi
Boys and Girls Club of Canton, MS
The National Society of Leadership and Success
Ridley Hill Baptist Church Sunday School Volunteer and Choir President
Residence Hall Association-Assistant Secretary

SKILLS: Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint

REFERENCES: Available upon request

Cover Letter Outline

A resume should always be accompanied by a cover letter, unless you are handing it directly to someone or applying through an online system. When emailing a cover letter and resume, make the cover letter the text within your email and attach your resume.

The employer will evaluate you as a prospective employee based upon the appearance, content, grammar and punctuation in your cover letter.

Your present address
City, State Zip Code

Date

Mr./Ms. _____, title
Name of Company
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

1st paragraph - Explain why you are submitting your resume. State the position for which you are applying. Mention how you heard about the opening: newspaper, name of person who referred you, etc. It's helpful for potential employers to know how applicants are hearing about position openings. If you have been referred by an individual, it gives the employer a reference right from the start.

2nd paragraph - State why you would be qualified for the position; mention specific qualifications or experiences you have that may be pertinent to the position. Explain any particular interest you have in the company, location, or position. Point out relevant information that may not appear in your resume.

3rd paragraph - Express interest in an interview; indicate best time to contact you or suggest you will call to set up an interview time. Your closing should encourage a specific action by the reader.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Typed Signature

Cover Letter Example

1234 University Way
Jackson, MS 39217

September 12, 20xx

Mr. Carl Reeves, Vice President
XYZ Corporation
1234 Business Plaza
Birmingham, AL 35201

Dear Mr. Reeves:

I was very pleased to learn more about XYZ Corporation during your campus information session on August 21, 20xx. As a senior Sociology major at Jackson State University, I was impressed by XYZ's commitment to community partnerships and your reputation as a leader in your field. I also enjoyed the opportunity to speak with several former students currently working at XYZ, including John Smith, who enthusiastically described the variety of projects he has completed over the past four years. Because of your industry success, your dedication to community service, and your leading-edge projects, I am very interested in pursuing a position within your organization.

Currently, I am serving as an intern with the City of Jackson, Mississippi. In addition to my internship, I have served as the Vice President of Membership for the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity. This group participates in a number of recruiting activities to maintain and continually increase membership, including several new programs that I initiated over the past two years. As a result of these new programs, membership has increased for Alpha Phi Omega by 8%.

In closing, I am genuinely interested in a position with XYZ Corporation. I look forward to having the opportunity to meet with you and to discuss my qualifications further. You may contact me at 123-456-7890 or tigermail@jsums.edu if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Josephina Tiger
Josephina Tiger

Cover letters must be customized to fit the job opening. Whenever possible, address the letter to the person in charge of interviewing.

Letters

1234 University Way
Jackson, MS 39217
(281)123-4567
tigermail@jsums.edu

October 15, 20xx

Ms./Mr. Xxxxxx
Manager, Retail Giant
1234 Retail Way
Birmingham, AL 35201

Send a thank-you note
within 24 hours of your
interaction, whether
interview, office visit, or
information session if you
had one-on-one contact.

Dear Ms./Mr. Xxxxxx,

Thank you for your time during your recruiting visit to Jackson State University on October 14, 20xx. During my interview, I was excited to learn more about the Innovative Management Trainee program with Retail Giant. It is a wonderful opportunity and I look forward to hearing from you.

As we discussed, I will be graduating in December with a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics. Complementing my education, I have worked over the past five years in the retail sector in various positions, including sales clerk and assistant manager. I am confident that this combination of education and experience provide me with the relevant skills to successfully complete Retail Giant's program and to become an effective leader within your organization.

Again, thank you for your time and for your interest, Ms./Mr. Xxxxxx. The interview reinforced my strong desire to become a part of your management team, and I eagerly await the next step in this process. I can be reached by phone at (281) 123-4567 or by email at tiger@jsums.edu should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Joe Tiger
Joe Tiger

Thank-You Letter Example

References

Always ask for permission first before using someone as a reference. References can be employers, professors, advisors and any professional individuals who know you well.

Select references who have seen you in a professional capacity and can talk about your skills, experience, and accomplishments.

References should be written on a separate page from the resume and should list complete contact information including the person's organization/title, address, telephone numbers and email, if permission is given to use it. Include your name and contact information at the top of the page exactly as it appears on your resume.

When you've supplied a potential employer with reference information, it is beneficial to contact the reference and let them know they may be receiving a call from Person, Title, Company regarding a ____ position. No coaching is necessary, this is just a simple notification that they may be contacted.

Tiger Name

123 Spring Loop, #1234
Jackson, MS 39217
(601) 123-4567
tigermail@jsums.edu

Dr. A
Professor
Jackson State University
College of Business
1400 JR Lynch Street, Room 100
Jackson, MS 39217
(601) 123-4567
aaaa@jsums.edu

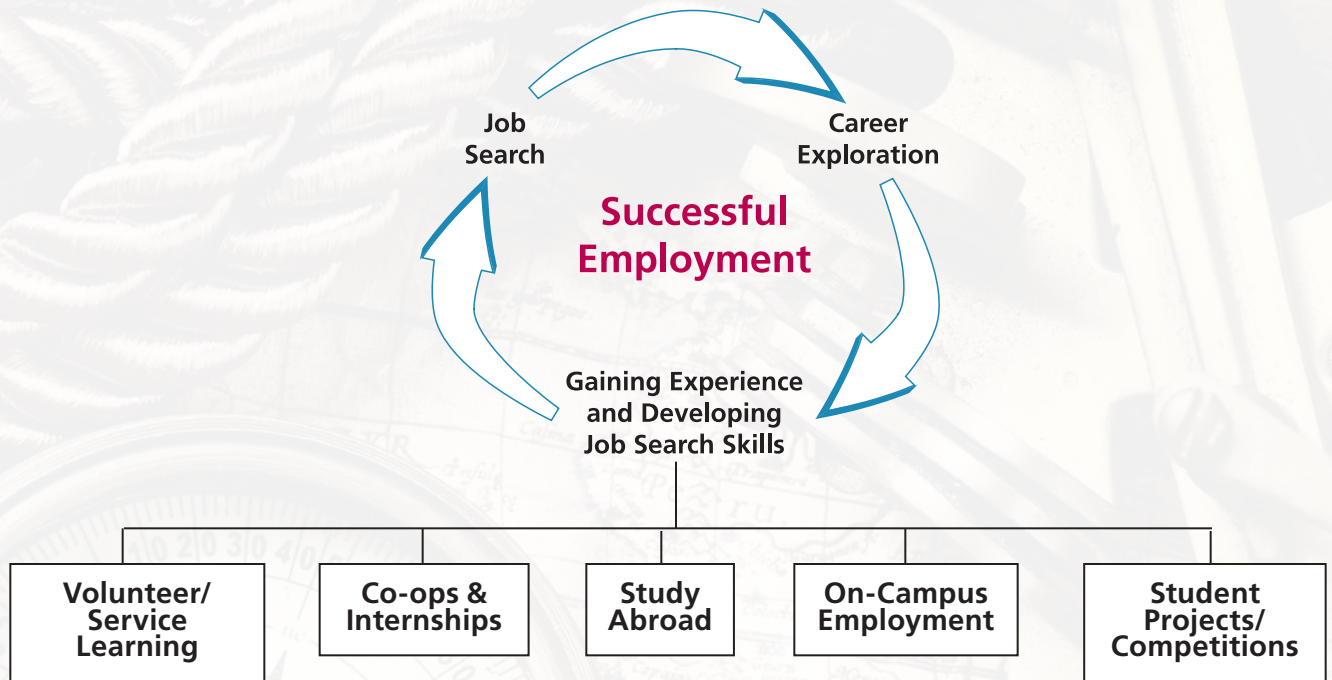
Mr. B
Supervisor
Mead Paper
2705 Market Street
Chillicothe, OH 45601
(419) 123-4567
bbbb@mead.com

Ms. C
Department Manager
Johnson Controls, Inc.
4527 Appleton Drive
Sparks, MD 21152
(301) 123-4567
cccc@employer.com

Gaining Experience

Career-Related Experience

Integrating Work With Learning



Why Should You Get Career-Related Experience?

Gaining career-related experience can have a direct impact on your professional development, because the majority of employers who recruit college graduates prefer to hire those who have some type of related experience. 90 percent of employers said candidate experience is a factor in hiring decisions, according to an annual survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Nearly half of surveyed employers wanted new graduate experience to come from an internship or co-op programs.

These experiences help you try out and confirm your career interests, develop real world skills that enhance your qualifications for future employment, make contacts in your field, and possibly gain offers of full-time employment.

How Can You Get This Experience?

- Cooperative Education
- Internships
- Externships
- Volunteering
- Job Shadowing
- Part-time/Seasonal Jobs
- Research Opportunities
- Student Activities/Clubs

Getting the Most Out of a Career Fair

MANY EMPLOYERS USE career fairs—both on and off campus—to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants. Career fairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small community-sponsored events to giant regional career expositions held at major convention centers.

Most career fairs consist of booths and/or tables manned by recruiters and other representatives from each organization. For on-campus events, some employers also send alumni representatives. Large corporations and some government agencies have staffs who work the career fair “circuit” nationwide.

An employer’s display area is also subject to wide variance. It could be a simple table with a stack of brochures and business cards and a lone representative or an elaborate multimedia extravaganza with interactive displays, videos, posters and a team of recruiters.

Fashions and Accessories

Generally, the appropriate attire for career fair attendees is more relaxed than what you’d wear to an actual job interview. In most cases, “business casual” is the norm. If you’re unsure of the dress code (particularly for off-campus events), it would be wise to err on the overdressed side—you’ll make a better impression if you appear professional. Think of it as a dress rehearsal for your real interviews!

Remember to bring copies of your resume (or resumes, if you have several versions tailored to different career choices), a few pens and pencils (have backups—they have a way of disappearing), a folder or portfolio and some sort of note-taking device (paper or electronic pad). Keep track of the recruiters with whom you speak and send follow-up notes to the ones who interest you. Don’t bring your backpack; it’s cumbersome for you, it gets in the way of others and it screams “student!” instead of “candidate!”

Stop, Look and Listen

Keep your eyes and ears open—there’s nothing wrong with subtly eavesdropping on the questions asked and answers received by your fellow career fair attendees. You might pick up some valuable information, in addition to witnessing some real-life career search “do’s and don’ts.”

In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mousepads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions.

Here’s a great bit of career fair advice from Stanford University’s *Career Fair* guide:

“Create a one-minute ‘commercial’ as a way to sell yourself to an employer. This is a great way to introduce yourself. The goal is to connect your background to the organization’s need. In one minute or less, you need to introduce yourself, demonstrate your knowledge of the company, express enthusiasm and interest and relate your background to the company’s need.”

You’re a Prospector—Start Digging

The questions you ask at a career fair depend upon your goals. Are you interested in finding out about a particular career field? Then ask generalized questions about working within the industry. If you’re seeking career opportunities with a specific employer, focus your questions on the application and interview process, and ask for specific information about that employer.

Fair Thee Well

By all means, try to attend at least one career fair before beginning your formal job interviewing process. For new entrants into the professional career marketplace, this is a good way to make the transition into “self-marketing mode” without the formality and possible intimidation of a one-on-one job interview. It’s an opportunity that’s too valuable to miss.

A Few Words About Career Fair Etiquette

1. Don’t interrupt the employer reps or your fellow job-seekers. If someone else is monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the rep to let him or her know that you’re interested in speaking. You may be doing a favor by giving the recruiter an out. If all else fails, move to the next exhibit and plan to come back later.
2. If you have a real interest in an employer, find out the procedures required to secure an interview. At some career fairs, initial screening interviews may be done on the spot. Other times, the career fair is used to pre-screen applicants for interviews to be conducted later (either on campus or at the employer’s site).
3. Sincerity always wins. Don’t lay it on too thick, but don’t be too blasé either. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communication skills.
4. Don’t just drop your resume on employers’ display tables. Try to get it into a person’s hands and at least say a few words. If the scene is too busy and you can’t get a word in edgewise, jot a note on your resume to the effect of, “You were so busy that we didn’t get a chance to meet. I’m very interested in talking to you.” Look around the display for the recruiter’s business card (or at the very least, write down his or her name and get some literature with the company’s address) and send a follow-up note and another copy of your resume.
5. If you know ahead of time that one of your “dream companies” is a career fair participant, do some prior research (at minimum, visit their website. A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the masses of other attendees.

Network

Your Way

to a Job

Many people use the classified ads as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10% to 20% of jobs are ever published—which means that 80% to 90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market. For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

A NETWORK IS an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career. Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings who provide you with career information and advice.

Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search. Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don't give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and their jobs and are willing to give realistic—and free—advice.

By Thomas J. Denham

Eight Keys to Networking

1 BE PREPARED First, define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish by networking. Remember, your purpose in networking is to get to know people who can provide information regarding careers and leads. Some of the many benefits of networking include increased visibility within your field, propelling your professional development, finding suitable mentors, increasing your chances of promotion and perhaps finding your next job.

Second, know yourself—your education, experience and skills. Practice a concise, one-minute presentation of yourself so that people will know the kinds of areas in which you are interested. Your networking meeting should include the following elements: introduction, self-overview, Q&A, obtaining referrals and closing.

2 BE TARGETED Identify your network. For some, “I don’t have a professional network. I don’t know anyone,” may be your first reaction. You can start by listing everyone you know who are potential prospects: family members, friends, faculty, neighbors, classmates, alumni, bosses, co-workers and community associates. Attend meetings of organizations in your field of interest and get involved. You never know where you are going to meet someone who could lead you to your next job.



Social Networking Websites

Career professionals—and parents—are warning young job seekers that using social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, may be hazardous to your career. After all, do you want your potential employer to see photos of you at last week-end’s party? Certainly, those photos could diminish your prospects of landing a job. However, more job seekers are using social networking to enhance their preparation for interviews, garner an advantage over less-wired peers, and even gain an edge with recruiters.

One example of a constructive use of social networking websites is gathering background information about the recruiters with whom you will interview. By finding out about topics that will interest the recruiter, you may gain an upper hand in the interview process. In addition, stronger connections with a potential employer can be made by talking about the clubs he or she belongs to and even friends you have in common—information that can be discovered on Facebook.

Research on professional sites like LinkedIn can also be used to prepare for site visits. By using the alumni connections available through LinkedIn, you can gain added insight into potential employers. If you are interviewing with a company, search for alumni who are working there. You can have conversations with alumni via LinkedIn that you wouldn’t have in an interview, such as, “do you like it at the company” or “can you negotiate salary?”

Networking Rules

When you seek and maintain professional connections via social networking sites, follow the same etiquette you would if you were networking by phone and in person. Remember that every contact is creating an impression. Online, you might tend to be less formal because you are communicating in a space that you typically share with friends. Just as you would not let your guard down if you were having dinner with a potential employer, you must maintain a positive and professional approach when conversing with networking contacts online. Ask good questions, pay

attention to the answers, and be polite—this includes sending at least a brief thank-you note anytime someone gives you advice or assistance.

If It's OK for Mom, It's OK for Facebook

The more controversial aspect of the interplay between social networking and job searching is the privacy debate. Some observers, including career counselors, deans, and parents, worry that students put themselves at a disadvantage in the job search by making personal information available on Facebook and Twitter pages. More and more companies are using such websites as a screening tool.

Concern about privacy focuses on two areas: social life and identity/affiliations. Parents and career counselors argue that job-seekers would never show photos of themselves at a party in the middle of an interview, so why would they allow employers to see party photos on a Facebook page? Students often respond that most employers do not even use social networking sites and that employers already know that college students drink.

While it may be true that senior managers are less likely to be on Facebook, young recruiters may be active, and in many cases, employers ask younger employees to conduct online searches of candidates. Why risk losing a career opportunity because of a photo with two drinks in your hand?

It's easy to deduce that if an employer is comparing two candidates who are closely matched in terms of GPA and experience, and one has questionable photos and text on his or her online profile and the second does not, that the second student will get the job offer.

Identity—Public or Private?

Identity and affiliations are the second area where social networking and privacy issues may affect your job search and employment prospects. Historically, job-seekers have fought for increased protection from being asked questions about their identity, including religious affiliation and sexual orientation, because this information could be used by biased employers to discriminate. Via social networking sites, employers can now find information that they are not allowed to ask you.

Employers can no longer legally ask these questions in most states, however, some students make matters like religion, political involvement, and sexual orientation public on their web pages.

3 BE PROFESSIONAL Ask your networking prospects for advice—not for a job. Your networking meetings should be a source of career information, advice and contacts. Start off the encounter with a firm handshake, eye contact and a warm smile. Focus on asking for one thing at a time. Your contacts expect you to represent yourself with your best foot forward.

4 BE PATIENT Heena Noorani, research analyst with New York-based Thomson Financial, recommends avoiding the feeling of discouragement if networking does not provide immediate results or instant answers. She advises, "Be prepared for a slow down after you get started. Stay politely persistent with your leads and build momentum. Networking is like gardening: You do not plant the seed, then quickly harvest. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to pay off."



Photo © naka - Fotolia.com

Questions to Ask During Networking Meetings

- What do you like most (least) about your work?
- Can you describe a typical workday or week?
- What type of education and experience do you need to remain successful in this field?
- What are the future career opportunities in this field?
- What are the challenges in balancing work and personal life?
- Why do people enter/leave this field or company?
- Which companies have the best track record for promoting minorities?
- What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
- With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?

Do's & Don'ts of Networking

- Do keep one hand free from a briefcase or purse so you can shake hands when necessary.
- Do bring copies of your resume.
- Don't tell them your life story; you are dealing with busy people, so get right to the point.
- Don't be shy or afraid to ask for what you need.
- Don't pass up opportunities to network.

5 BE FOCUSED ON QUALITY—NOT QUANTITY In a large group setting, circulate and meet people, but don't try to talk to everyone. It's better to have a few meaningful conversations than 50 hasty introductions. Don't cling to people you already know; you're unlikely to build new contacts that way. If you are at a reception, be sure to wear a nametag and collect or exchange business cards so you can later contact the people you meet.

6 BE REFERRAL-CENTERED The person you are networking with may not have a job opening, but he or she may know someone who is hiring. The key is to exchange information and then expand your network by obtaining additional referrals each time you meet someone new. Be sure to mention the person who referred you.

7 BE PROACTIVE Stay organized and track your networking meetings. Keep a list of your contacts and update it frequently with the names of any leads given to you. Send a thank-you note or email if appropriate. Ask if you can follow up the conversation with a phone call, or even better, with a more in-depth meeting in the near future.

8 BE DEDICATED TO NETWORKING Most importantly, networking should be ongoing. You will want to stay in touch with contacts over the long haul—not just when you need something. Make networking part of your long-term career plan.

Thomas J. Denham is the managing partner and career counselor of Careers in Transition LLC.

Social Networking Websites continued

You would never include religious and political affiliations as well as sexual orientation or transgender identity (GLBT) on your resume, so do you want this information to be available via social networking sites? There are two strategies to consider. One approach is that if you wish to only work for an employer with whom you can be openly religious, political, or GLBT then making that information available on your web page will screen out discriminating employers and make it more likely that you will land with an employer open to your identity and expression.

A second approach though, is to maintain your privacy and keep more options open. Investigate potential employers thoroughly and pay special attention at site visits to evaluate whether the company would be welcoming. This strategy is based on two perspectives shared by many career professionals. First, as a job-seeker, you want to present only your relevant skills and experience throughout the job search; all other information is irrelevant. Second, if you provide information about your identity and affiliations, you may be discriminated against by one person in the process even though the company overall is a good match.

Strategies for Safe and Strategic Social Networking

1. Be aware of what other people can see on your page. Recruiters use these sites or ask their colleagues to do searches on candidates.
2. Determine access intentionally. Some career counselors advocate deactivating your Facebook or Twitter accounts while job searching.
3. Set a standard. If anything appears on your page that you wouldn't want an interviewer to see, remove the offending content.
4. Use social networking to your advantage. Use these sites to find alumni in the companies that interest you and contact them before you interview in your career center or before a site visit. In addition, use social networking sites and internet searches to learn more about the recruiters who will interview you before the interview.

"Social Networking Websites" written by Harriet L. Schwartz.

How to Stand Apart From the Crowd

COMPETITION FOR JOBS is at an all-time high, so it's essential that you distinguish yourself from other job applicants. Regardless of the field you're entering, individuality matters. Everything you've experienced until now—in the classroom, during after-school jobs and internships, and through volunteer experiences—sets you apart from your fellow students. These unique experiences provide knowledge and abilities that must be demonstrated to potential employers through the resume, cover letter and interview. This is your chance to prove that you're the best candidate for the job and will make a great addition to their team. Here are some ways to make sure your true potential shines.

What Makes You Special?

Your roommate may have the exact same major and GPA as you do, but those factors are only superficial. More importantly: everyone has his or her own set of life experiences that influence personal growth and skill development. Maybe you've traveled around the world, speak several languages, or were born in another country. Or perhaps you've worked your way through high school and college to help support your family. Numbers only tell part of the story. When an employer is evaluating you for a job, you have to make sure your unique experiences come through on your resume and cover letter so that you have the opportunity to elaborate on the details during the interview.

Go Team!

Employers want hires who can hit the ground running and work well with others in a team environment. Your academic experience has been packed with teamwork even if you don't realize it. Just think back to all those group projects and study sessions. Many extracurricular activities from athletics and fraternities and sororities to clubs, volunteer work and student government require team participation as well. By using the language of teamwork and cooperation on your resume and cover letter, you've taken the first step toward proving that you're a collaborator. During the interview you can further express what you've learned about yourself and others through teamwork.

Leadership 101

Teamwork is key, but employers also want candidates who can step up to the plate and take charge when it's appropriate. If you've never been class president, however, don't fear; leadership can be demonstrated in many subtle ways. In addition to traditional leadership roles, leaders also take on responsibility by providing others with information and advice. If you've ever helped a friend with a paper, volunteered to teach a class or given a speech that motivated others, then you've served as a leader. During your interview, speak confidently about your accomplishments, but don't cross the line into arrogance. Good leaders know when to show off, as well as when to listen to others.

Art of the Resume

Your resume provides the opportunity to stand out, but don't distinguish yourself by using bright-colored paper or an unusual

font. Those tactics are distracting and leave employers remembering you negatively. Instead, it's the content of your resume that will really get you noticed. Make sure to describe each experience in clear detail; highlight not only what you did, but also what results were gained from your actions. Don't forget to include special skills, such as foreign languages and international travel.

Cover Letter Zingers

While your resume chronicles your experiences, the cover letter lets your personality shine through. Here you can expand upon your past experiences and briefly discuss what you learned. Use concrete examples from your resume in order to showcase specific skills and characteristics. Be sure to tailor each letter to the specific organization and position, and state specifically why you want to work for the organization. Demonstrate that you've done your research; it will impress employers and set your letter apart from the rest.

Interview Expert

When it comes to the interview, preparation is key. Be ready to talk about everything you've done in a positive light, and make sure you're well informed about the organization and industry. Focus on what distinguishes the employer from their competition and why you are a good fit. If possible, speak to alumni or other current employees to learn more. Remember, practice makes perfect; many career centers offer mock interviews with a counselor. And don't be afraid to ask for help from friends and professionals as you review the answers to common interview questions.

Do's and Don'ts

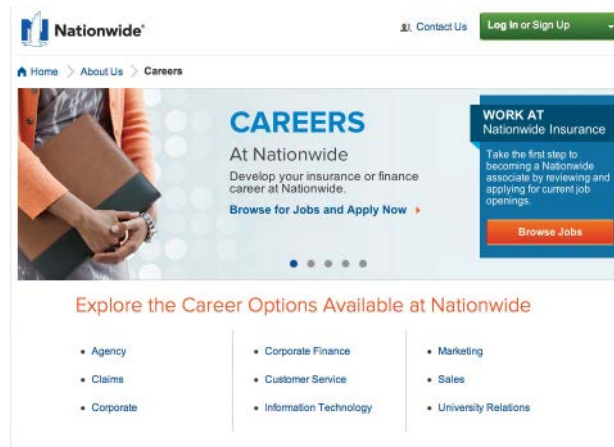
- DO dress the part. Even employers with casual dress codes expect interviewees to be dressed in professional business attire.
- DON'T chew gum, wear too much cologne/perfume or smoke before the interview.
- DO look your interviewer in the eye and offer a firm handshake.
- DON'T try too hard to please and appear loud or cocky.
- DO emphasize your skills and accomplishments.
- DON'T make excuses for failures or lack of experience. Instead, take responsibility for your mistakes and change the subject to something positive.

Written by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, Director, Industry Relations, Tisch Center, New York University.

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Starting Your Search (Job or Internship)

Job Search Strategies: Pros and Cons

THERE ARE MANY ways to look for a job, some of which are better than others. Presented below are some of the most popular ways, as well as helpful hints and pros and cons of each.

Strategies	Tools, Pros, Cons and Helpful Hints
INTERNET Search online job banks and company websites. Submit resume online/post on job boards.	Tools: Access to the web and an electronic resume Pros: Actual job openings. Many employers use a wide variety of job listing services. Many listings have free to low-cost access. Worldwide geographic reach. Cons: Competition is growing as use of the internet increases. Pay attention to multiple listings—one position posted on a few sites—to avoid applying multiple times. Hints: Use the web frequently as information and sites change quickly.
NETWORKING Talk to everyone you know to develop a list of possible contacts; ask for information on job/companies and to circulate your resume.	Tools: List of contacts, resumes and business attire Pros: May learn of unadvertised openings. May result in a courtesy interview. Often results in a closer match of your interests to a job. Cons: A contact in itself is not enough to get you a job. You may exhaust all leads without landing a job. Quite time-consuming. Hints: Follow through on all leads. Keep broadening your network of contacts.
SOCIAL MEDIA LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter	Tools: Access to the internet, social media accounts and an electronic resume Pros: Access to wide variety of employers, contacts and current job openings. Cons: Employers can view your information and/or pictures. Be sure your profile is professional, or use a separate account for connecting to employers. Hints: Follow your favorite companies. Show off your education and skills. Display an appropriate photo. Perform a search on your name to review your internet presence, and clean up the results if necessary.
ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING Follow specific procedures to secure on-campus interviews.	Tools: Scheduling interviews, employer literature, resumes and business attire Pros: One of the primary ways in which companies recruit for technical and business positions. Cons: May be less effective for nontechnical/nonbusiness candidates. Hints: Use the interview schedule as a way to identify possible employers, even if you don't get to interview on campus with those employers.
TARGETED MAILING Develop a good cover letter tailored to a specific type of job and the needs of the company. Send letter with resume to selected companies.	Tools: List of well-researched companies, tailored cover letters and resumes Pros: Better approach than the mass-mailing method. Investment of time and effort should merit stronger response from employers. Cons: Requires a significant investment of time in researching companies and writing cover letters as well as following up with contacts. Hints: Try to find out who is in charge of the area in which you want to work; send your materials to that person. Great method when used in conjunction with networking.
IN-PERSON VISIT Visit many companies. Ask to see person in specific department. Submit resume and application, if possible.	Tools: Business attire, company address list and resumes Pros: Resume and application are on file with the company. Cons: Requires a great deal of time to make a relatively small number of contacts. Hints: Research the companies prior to your visit. Ask for a specific person or ask about a specific type of job.
RESUME REFERRAL Register with one of the many national referral services. As jobs are listed by employers, the data bank of registrants is searched for matches. If your materials match, they are sent to the employers.	Tools: Registration form supplied by service Pros: Another way to monitor the job market and get your qualifications to the attention of employers. Cons: May involve a fee. Often more helpful to those in technical or specialized fields. May not learn of the status of your materials. Hints: Use only in conjunction with other job search strategies.
EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES Respond to employment agency ads in newspapers; check phone book for names of agencies to contact.	Tools: Resumes and business attire Pros: Fee-paid jobs for graduates in technical fields or those with marketable experience. Cons: May be less help to non-technical/inexperienced graduates. Be wary if you, instead of the employer, have to pay a fee. Hints: Identify agencies that specialize in your field. Make frequent contact with your counselor to obtain better service.
WANT ADS Scan want ads. Mail resume with cover letter tailored to specific job qualifications.	Tools: Newspapers, journals, newsletters, trade magazines, cover letters and resumes Pros: Involves minimal investment of time in identifying companies. Resume and cover letter are sent for actual job opening. Cons: Resume and cover letter will compete with large number of others. Ads follow job market; least effective in times of economic downturn. Hints: Use as a meter on the job market in a certain career field. Try to get your materials in as early as possible.

Adapted and reprinted with permission from Career Services, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

How to Find the Right Job

FINDING THE JOB you want takes many steps and involves just as many decisions. This checklist is designed to help you along the way and guide you to the appropriate sources. Be sure to discuss your progress with your career advisor.

Knowing What You Want

- ✓ Choose your ideal work environment—large corporation, small business, government agency or nonprofit organization.
- ✓ Choose your ideal location—urban, suburban or rural.
- ✓ List your three most useful job skills and know which is your strongest.
- ✓ Know whether you want to work with people, data or things.
- ✓ Know whether you enjoy new projects or prefer following a regular routine.
- ✓ List some of the main career areas that might interest you.
- ✓ List your favorite leisure time activities.
- ✓ Know what kind of reward is most important to you in a job—money, security, creative authority, etc.

Researching Career Options

- ✓ Develop a list of career possibilities to research.
- ✓ Visit your career services library and utilize the internet to learn about various careers. *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* are valuable resources.
- ✓ Consider whether your desired career requires an advanced degree.
- ✓ Keep up with current trends in your field through trade publications, news/business magazines and newspapers.
- ✓ Identify employers interested in interviewing someone with your academic background and experience; create a list of three or more employers in the field you are considering.
- ✓ Use the internet to learn more about potential employers and check out salary surveys and hiring trends in your anticipated career field.
- ✓ Make at least three professional contacts through LinkedIn, friends, relatives or professors to learn more about your field of interest.
- ✓ Meet with faculty and alumni who work or who have worked in your field to talk about available jobs and the outlook for your field.

Getting Experience

- ✓ Narrow down the career options you are considering through coursework and personal research.
- ✓ Participate in a work experience or internship program in your chosen field to learn of the daily requirements of the careers you are considering. Such assignments can lead to permanent job offers following graduation.
- ✓ Become an active member in one or more professional associations—consult the *Encyclopedia of Associations* for organizations in your field.
- ✓ Volunteer for a community or charitable organization to gain further work experience. Volunteer positions can and should be included on your resume.

Creating a Resume

- ✓ Form a clear job objective.
- ✓ Know how your skills and experience support your objective.
- ✓ Use action verbs to highlight your accomplishments.
- ✓ Limit your resume to one page and make sure it is free of misspelled words and grammatical errors.
- ✓ Create your resume using a word processing program and have it professionally duplicated on neutral-colored paper, preferably white, light gray or beige. If you are submitting your resume online, be sure to include relevant keywords and avoid italics, bold and underlined passages.
- ✓ Compose a separate cover letter to accompany each resume and address the letter to a specific person. Avoid sending a letter that begins "Dear Sir/Madam."

Preparing for the Interview

- ✓ Arrange informational interviews with employees from companies with which you might want to interview.
Use your network of acquaintances to schedule these meetings.
- ✓ Thoroughly research each employer with whom you have an interview—be familiar with product lines, services offered and growth prospects.
- ✓ Practice your interviewing technique with friends to help prepare for the actual interview.
- ✓ Using the information you have gathered, formulate questions to ask the employer during the interview.
- ✓ Arrive on time in professional business attire.
- ✓ Collect the needed information to write a thank-you letter after each interview.

Etiquette

Professional Etiquette

YOUR ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Good professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job and jeopardize personal and business relationships.

Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Terry Cobb, Owner, HR-Employment Solutions, emphasizes the importance of making a good first impression—beginning with the handshake. A firm shake, he says, indicates to employers that you're confident and assertive. A limp handshake, on the other hand, sends the message that you're not interested or qualified for the job. Dave Owenby, Human Resources Manager for North and South Carolina at Sherwin Williams, believes, "Good social skills include having a firm handshake, smiling, making eye contact and closing the meeting with a handshake."

The following basic rules will help you get ahead in the workplace:

- Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. "Joe, please meet Ms. Crawford, CEO at American Enterprise, Inc., in Cleveland." "Mr. Jones, this is Kate Smith, a senior majoring in computer information systems at Northwestern University."
- Unless given permission, always address someone by his or her title and last name.
- Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

Dining

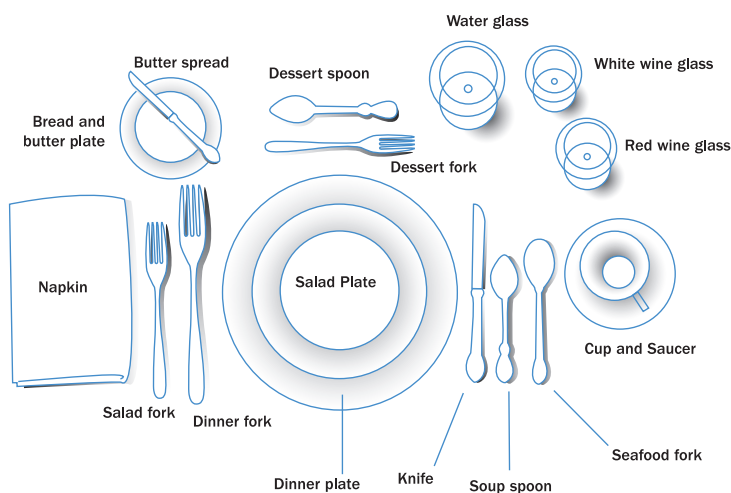
Shirley Willey, owner of Etiquette & Company, reports that roughly 80% of second interviews involve a business meal. Cobb remembers one candidate who had passed his initial interview with flying colors. Because the second interview was scheduled close to noon, Cobb decided to conduct the interview over lunch. Initially, the candidate was still in the "interview" mode and maintained his professionalism. After a while, however, he became more relaxed—and that's when the candidate's real personality began to show. He had terrible table manners, made several off-color remarks and spoke negatively about previous employers. Needless to say, Cobb was unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job.

Remember that an interview is always an interview, regardless of how relaxed or informal the setting. Anything that is said or done will be considered by the interviewer, cautions Cobb.

In order to make a good impression during a lunch or dinner interview, make sure you:

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/hostess indicates the seating arrangement.
- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a *talking* business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.

- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.



Eating

Follow these simple rules for eating and drinking:

- Start eating with the implement that is farthest away from your plate. You may have two spoons and two forks. The spoon farthest away from your plate is a soup spoon. The fork farthest away is a salad fork unless you have three forks, one being much smaller, which would be a seafood fork for an appetizer. The dessert fork/spoon is usually above the plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Dip soup away from you; sip from the side of the spoon.
- Season food only after you have tasted it.
- Pass salt and pepper together—even if asked for only one.
- Pass all items to the right. If the item has a handle, such as a pitcher, pass with the handle toward the next person. For bowls with spoons, pass with the spoon ready for the next person. If you are the one to reach to the center of the table for an item, pass it before serving yourself.
- While you are speaking during a meal, utensils should be resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Don't chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.

The interviewer will usually take care of the bill and the tip. Be prepared, however, if this doesn't happen and have small bills ready to take care of your part, including the tip. Never make an issue of the check.

Social skills can make or break your career. Employees have to exhibit a certain level of professionalism and etiquette in their regular work day, and particularly in positions where they come in contact with clients. Be one step ahead—practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.

Written by Jennie Hunter, retired professor, Western Carolina University.

Business Etiquette Blunders and How to Fix Them

GETTING A HANDLE on business etiquette is even more important in this digital age, when the HR process is in flux and the “rules” aren’t always clear. Here are some of the top etiquette complaints from recruiters, and ways you can avoid those mistakes so that even old-school interviewers will be impressed with your good manners and social graces.

No Show = No Job

This should go without saying, but actually showing up to an interview is necessary to lock down a job offer. Yet, too many candidates casually blow off interviews. One of the easiest ways to make a good impression is to arrive for interviews 10-15 minutes early, so you have plenty of time to get settled and perhaps check your appearance one last time.

If something pressing does come up, immediately call to cancel or reschedule. Decided you don’t want the job after all? Don’t just disappear. It’s not only rude, but every industry has a grapevine, and word of flakiness gets around. Failing to show for an on-campus interview can have even more severe consequences, so make sure you know the cancelation and no-show policy.

Too Negative

“Keep your emotional baggage outside the interview door,” says Peggy Klaus, author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*. We all have days when the alarm doesn’t go off, the weather is a mess, and there’s no parking spot. Don’t whine. Be enthusiastic, eager, flexible, and most of all—likeable. “Do not expect the interviewer to entertain you, or do your job for you by drawing you out,” she adds.

Thankless

Sending a thank-you note is an important way to demonstrate good manners. It doesn’t have to be handwritten, but it should be considered and specific. “An email is fine, but make sure it shows thought and effort,” says Klaus. “Don’t do it in the elevator on the way down. Do it with forethought, so you can translate what you got out of the interview.”

If you do a round of interviews with three people, say, then send three slightly different thank-you notes that day, or the next. (Get business cards so you have everyone’s contact information close at hand.)

Too Familiar

When emailing someone you don’t know well, be a bit formal: Capitalize words, don’t use texting shorthand, and start with a salutation. “You don’t send an email to a *New York Times* bestselling writer and say ‘Hey, I need to know...,’” complains Martin Yate, author of [NYT bestseller] *Knock ‘em Dead, the Ultimate Job Search Guide*. “No, you start with ‘Dear Martin...’ and finish with ‘Thank you for your time. Sincerely, your name.’”

“Similarly, if everyone in the office calls your interviewer ‘Sam,’ adjust that to ‘Ms. or Mr. Jones,’” says Yate. “Be respectful of the people who can put food on your table.”

What Dress Code?

Dressing appropriately for an interview is a balancing act. One level in formality above what people normally wear on the job is just right. For men, if you’d wear khakis and a polo shirt on the job, wear dress slacks and a blazer to the interview. Women should follow a similar “step up” plan. (Scope out company dress codes during informational interviews.)

“On an interview, you’re dressing to get hired, not dated,” says Yate. “Your dress must be conservative and clean cut. It shows respect for the occasion, job, company, interviewer, and most of all—for yourself.”

Dining Disaster

You may have an opportunity to interview at lunch or dinner. It can be doubly nerve wracking to think about what you’ll say, as well as how to keep the spaghetti on your fork. “If you eat like a caveman with a mastodon on your plate, you won’t be invited to dine with the chairman of the board, or important clients,” Yate says. Don’t drink, even if your interviewer does, so that you can keep your wits about you, and be courteous to the wait staff. Consider ordering an easy-to-manage entrée.

Clueless About the Employer

It’s so easy to do online research, that there’s no reason for you not to know about a prospective employer—the company and the individual. How much will employers care if you don’t do your due diligence? One applicant at IBM was asked if he knew what those three letters stood for. He did not. Next! (In case you ever interview at IBM, the answer is International Business Machines.)

Annoying Devices

“We get complaints about candidates taking a cell phone call, or checking email, or texting in a meeting,” says Kathleen Downs, recruiting manager at Robert Half International in Orlando, Fla. “It’s a mistake to not silence a phone during a meeting. Even in the waiting room, we’ve had phones go off and it’s an inappropriate ring tone, like a hip-hop song with swear words.”

Make sure you have a greeting on your voicemail—some employers won’t leave a message if they aren’t sure they’ve reached the right party. And if your phone number is blocked, they can’t call you back if you don’t leave a message. “I’ve called candidates and gotten obnoxious voicemail messages, ‘You know who this is. You know what to do,’” she says. That’s not the way to win over a recruiter.

Poor Profile

Employers often complain of inappropriate photos or comments on an applicant’s social media profile. “You can try to make that info private, but somehow, someway, there’s a way to get to it,” Downs says. She has her Facebook profile set to private, and directs business contacts to her LinkedIn profile. “Don’t ever post anything racy. For example, don’t post a picture of yourself in a bikini—even if you look good!”

Tattoos and Piercings

Tribal tattoos, hair dyed colors not seen in nature, or dreadlocks may turn off conservative employers. If your personal style doesn’t go over well in interviews, cover up (easy with some tattoos) or get a makeover ASAP.

“A guy with a piercing came to an interview with a tongue ring in,” says Downs. “I told him to go to the restroom and take it out. It was stuck. He had to go to the tattoo parlor a few miles away and have it cut out.”

If your personal style is more important to you than a position with a company, spend a little more time researching the corporate culture of a company before you apply, so you can find the right fit.

Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebra.com.

The Interview

What Happens During the Interview?

THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS can be scary if you don't know what to expect. All interviews fit a general pattern. While each interview will differ, all will share three common characteristics: the beginning, middle and conclusion.

The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:

- Five minutes—small talk
- Fifteen minutes—a mutual discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
- Five minutes—asks you for questions
- Five minutes—conclusion of interview

As you can see, there is not a lot of time to state your case. The employer may try to do most of the talking. When you do respond to questions or ask your own, your statements should be concise and organized without being too brief.

It Starts Before You Even Say Hello

The typical interview starts before you even get into the inner sanctum. The recruiter begins to evaluate you the minute you are identified. You are expected to shake the recruiter's hand upon being introduced. Don't be afraid to extend your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

It's a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early. You can use the time to relax. It gets easier later. It may mean counting to ten slowly or wiping your hands on a handkerchief to keep them dry.

How's Your Small Talk Vocabulary?

Many recruiters will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics may range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that brings out your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated.

Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. This means you must do more than smile and nod.

The Recruiter Has the Floor

The main part of the interview starts when the recruiter begins discussing the organization. If the recruiter uses vague generalities about the position and you want more specific information, ask questions. Be sure you have a clear understanding of the job and the company.

As the interview turns to talk about your qualifications, be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative, i.e., low grade point average, no participation in outside activities, no related work experience. It is up to you to convince the recruiter that although these points appear negative, positive attributes can be found in them. A low GPA could stem from having to fully support yourself through college; you might have no related work experience, but plenty of experience that shows you to be a loyal and valued employee.

Many times recruiters will ask why you chose the major you did or what your career goals are. These questions are designed to determine your goal direction. Employers seek people who have direction and motivation. This can be demonstrated by your answers to these innocent-sounding questions.

It's Your Turn to Ask Questions

When the recruiter asks, "Now do you have any questions?" it's important to have a few ready. Dr. C. Randall Powell, author of *Career Planning Today*, suggests some excellent strategies for dealing with this issue. He says questions should elicit positive responses from the employer. Also, the questions should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the organization.

By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions, you show the employer you are serious about the organization and need more information. It also indicates to the recruiter that you have done your homework.

The Close Counts, Too

The interview isn't over until you walk out the door. The conclusion of the interview usually lasts five minutes and is very important. During this time the recruiter is assessing your overall performance.

It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous. Often the conclusion of the interview is indicated when the recruiter stands up. However, if you feel the interview has reached its conclusion, feel free to stand up first.

Shake the recruiter's hand and thank him or her for considering you. Being forthright is a quality that most employers will respect, indicating that you feel you have presented your case and the decision is now up to the employer.

Expect the Unexpected

During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Don't be too surprised. Many times questions are asked simply to see how you react.

For example, surprise questions could range from, "Tell me a joke" to "What time period would you like to have lived in?" These are not the kind of questions for which you can prepare in advance. Your reaction time and the response you give will be evaluated by the employer, but there's no way to anticipate questions like these. While these questions are not always used, they are intended to force you to react under some stress and pressure. The best advice is to think and give a natural response.

Evaluations Made by Recruiters

The employer will be observing and evaluating you during the interview. Erwin S. Stanton, author of *Successful Personnel Recruiting and Selection*, indicates some evaluations made by the employer during the interview include:

1. How mentally alert and responsive is the job candidate?
2. Is the applicant able to draw proper inferences and conclusions during the course of the interview?
3. Does the applicant demonstrate a degree of intellectual depth when communicating, or is his/her thinking shallow and lacking depth?
4. Has the candidate used good judgment and common sense regarding life planning up to this point?
5. What is the applicant's capacity for problem-solving activities?
6. How well does the candidate respond to stress and pressure?

Ten Rules of Interviewing

BEFORE STEPPING INTO an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. A job-seeker going to a job interview without preparing is like an actor performing on opening night without rehearsing.

To help with the interview process, keep the following ten rules in mind:

- 1 Keep your answers brief and concise.**
Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.
- 2 Include concrete, quantifiable data.**
Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.
- 3 Repeat your key strengths three times.**
It's essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company's or department's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths then they will be remembered and—if supported with quantifiable accomplishments—they will more likely be believed.
- 4 Prepare five or more success stories.**
In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.
- 5 Put yourself on their team.**
Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer's name and products or services. For example, "As a member of _____, I would carefully analyze the _____ and _____." Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.
- 6 Image is often as important as content.**
What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65 percent of the conveyed message is nonverbal; gestures, physical appearance and attire are highly influential during job interviews.
- 7 Ask questions.**
The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer's questions, write out specific questions you want to ask. Then look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don't ask about benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

- 8 Maintain a conversational flow.**
By consciously maintaining a conversational flow—a dialogue instead of a monologue—you will be perceived more positively. Use feedback questions at the end of your answers and use body language and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.
- 9 Research the company, product lines and competitors.**
Research will provide information to help you decide whether you're interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.
- 10 Keep an interview journal.**
As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief thank-you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

In Summary

Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully with the competition for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it and how you qualify for it. You also must face reality: Is the job attainable?

In addition, recognize what it is employers want in their candidates. They want "can do" and "will do" employees. Recognize and use the following factors to your benefit as you develop your sales presentation. In evaluating candidates, employers consider the following factors:

- Ability
- Loyalty
- Personality
- Acceptance
- Recommendations
- Outside activities while in school
- Impressions made during the interview
- Character
- Initiative
- Communication skills
- Work record

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.

Questions Asked by Employers

Personal

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your hobbies?
3. Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
4. Describe your ideal job.
5. What can you offer us?
6. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
7. Can you name some weaknesses?
8. Define success. Failure.
9. Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
10. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
11. Who are your role models? Why?
12. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
13. What motivates you most in a job?
14. Have you had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
15. Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
16. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
17. What do you know about our organization (products or services)?
18. Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
19. Do you plan to return to school for further education?

Education

20. Why did you choose your major?
21. Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
22. Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
23. In which campus activities did you participate?
24. Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
25. Which elective classes did you like best? Least? Why?
26. If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
27. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?

28. Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?

Experience

29. What job-related skills have you developed?
30. Did you work while going to school? In what positions?
31. What did you learn from these work experiences?
32. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
33. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
34. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
35. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
36. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
37. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

Career Goals

38. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
39. What kind of boss do you prefer?
40. Would you be successful working with a team?
41. Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
42. What other types of positions are you considering?
43. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
44. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
45. How do you feel about working overtime?
46. How do you feel about travel?
47. How do you feel about the possibility of relocating?
48. Are you willing to work flextime?

Before you begin interviewing, think about these questions and possible responses and discuss them with a career advisor. Conduct mock interviews and be sure you are able to communicate clear, unrehearsed answers to interviewers.

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Dressing for the Interview

DEPENDING UPON YOUR fashion style, whether it is the latest trends for the club scene or merely college senior casual, a job interview may be cause for some drastic wardrobe augmentation.

For your interviews, some of your individualism might have to be shelved or kept in the closet. In most business and technical job interviews, when it comes to your appearance, conservatism and conformity are in order.

While many companies have adopted the “office casual” dress code, don’t try to set new standards in the interview. When in doubt, it is better to be too conservative than to be too flashy. For men and women, a suit is the best bet.

Here are some guidelines:

MEN

- A two-piece suit will suffice in most instances.
- Solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics are safer than bold prints or patterns.
- Bright ties bring focus to the face, but a simple pattern is best for an interview. (A tip for larger men: Use a double Windsor knot to minimize a bulky appearance.)
- Wear polished shoes with socks high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs.

WOMEN

- A suit with a knee-length skirt and a tailored blouse is most appropriate.
- Although even the most conservative organizations allow more feminine looks these days, accessories should be kept simple. Basic pumps and modest jewelry and makeup help to present a professional look.
- Pants are more acceptable now but are not recommended for interviews.

Staying Within a Budget

For recent graduates just entering professional life, additions to wardrobes, or complete overhauls, are likely needed. Limited funds, however, can be an obstacle. Image consultant Christine Lazzarini suggests “capsule wardrobing.” For example, by mixing and matching, she says, an eight-piece capsule wardrobe can generate up to 28 ensembles.

Before shopping, Lazzarini advises establishing a budget, 50% of which should be targeted for accessories. For women, “even a brightly colored jacket could be considered an accessory when it makes an outfit you already have look entirely different.”

The most important piece in any wardrobe is a jacket that is versatile and can work with a number of other pieces, according to one fashion expert. This applies to men and women. “If you focus

on a suit, buy one with a jacket which may be used with other skirts or trousers,” says a women’s fashion director for a major national retailer. “Then add a black turtleneck or a white shirt. These are the fashion basics that you can build on.”

A navy or black blazer for men can work well with a few different gabardine pants. Although this kind of ensemble would be just as expensive as a single suit, it offers more versatility.

One accessory recommended by company representatives is a briefcase. “When I see one,” says one recruiter, “it definitely adds to the candidate’s stature. It is a symbol to me that the individual has done some research and that he or she is prepared.”

A Final Check

And, of course, your appearance is only as good as your grooming. Create a final checklist to review before you go on an interview:

- Neatly trimmed hair
- Conservative makeup
- No runs in stockings
- Shoes polished (some suggest wearing your sneakers on the way to an interview and changing before you enter the interview site)
- No excessive jewelry; men should refrain from wearing earrings
- No missing buttons, crooked ties or lint

You want your experience and qualifications to shine. Your appearance should enhance your presentation, not overwhelm it.

Taking a Casual Approach

“Office casual” is becoming the accepted mode of dress at more and more companies. The rules, however, for casual attire are subject to tremendous company-to-company variance. At some, “casual day” is a Friday-only observance, where the dress code is *slightly* relaxed—a sports coat and slacks for men and slacks and a sweater for women. At others, especially entrepreneurial computer companies, it’s shorts and sandals every day.

The safest fashion rule for new employees to follow is *dress about the same as your most conservatively attired co-worker*. As a new hire, don’t try to “push the boundaries” of casual attire.

Fashion Arrests

- Never wear denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do.
- Don’t dress too provocatively—you’re at work, not at a dance club.
- “Casual” doesn’t mean “sloppy”—your clothes should always be free of stains or holes.
- Workout wear belongs at the gym.

Play It Safe

- Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually a safe bet for both sexes.
- As for formal business attire, buy the best that your budget will allow.
- If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for *their* workplace, not yours.
- Go to the mall—most department and specialty stores have sections devoted to this style of office attire.



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The Art of Negotiating

AN AREA OF the job search that often receives little attention is the art of negotiating. Once you have been offered a job, you have the opportunity to discuss the terms of your employment. Negotiations may be uncomfortable or unsatisfying because we tend to approach them with a winner-take-all attitude that is counterproductive to the concept of negotiations.

Negotiating with your potential employer can make your job one that best meets your own needs as well as those of your employer. To ensure successful negotiations, it is important to understand the basic components. The definition of negotiation as it relates to employment is: a series of communications (either oral or in writing) that reach a satisfying conclusion for all concerned parties, most often between the new employee and the hiring organization.

Negotiation is a planned series of events that requires strategy, presentation and patience. Preparation is probably the single most important part of successful negotiations. Any good trial attorney will tell you the key to presenting a good case in the courtroom is the hours of preparation that happen beforehand. The same is true for negotiating. A good case will literally present itself. What follows are some suggestions that will help you prepare for successful negotiating.

Research

Gather as much factual information as you can to back up the case you want to make. For example, if most entering employees cannot negotiate salary, you may be jeopardizing the offer by focusing on that aspect of the package. Turn your attention to other parts of the offer such as their health plan, dental plan, retirement package, the type of schedule you prefer, etc.

Psychological Preparation

Chances are that you will not know the person with whom you will be negotiating. If you are lucky enough to be acquainted, spend some time reviewing what you know about this person's communication style and decision-making behavior.

In most cases, however, this person will be a stranger. Since most people find the unknown a bit scary, you'll want to ask yourself what approach to negotiating you find most comfortable. How will you psyche yourself up to feel confident enough to ask for what you want? How will you respond to counteroffers? What are your alternatives? What's your bottom line? In short, plan your strategy.

Be sure you know exactly what you want. This does not mean you will get exactly that, but having the information clear in your head will help you determine what you are willing to concede. Unless you know what you want, you won't be able to tell somebody else. Clarity improves communication, which is the conduit for effective negotiations.

Practice

Rehearse the presentation in advance using another person as the employer. If you make mistakes in rehearsal, chances are that you will not repeat them during the actual negotiations. A friend can critique your reasoning and help you prepare for questions. If this all seems like a lot of work, remember that if something is worth negotiating for, it is worth preparing for.

Dollars and Sense

Always begin by expressing genuine interest in the position and the organization, emphasizing the areas of agreement but allowing "wiggle room" to compromise on other areas. Be prepared to support your points of disagreement, outlining the parts you would like to alter, your suggestions on how this can be done and why it would serve the company's best interests to accommodate your request.

Be prepared to defend your proposal. Back up your reasons for wanting to change the offer with meaningful, work-related skills and positive benefits to the employer. Requesting a salary increase because you are a fast learner or have a high GPA are usually not justifiable reasons in the eyes of the employer. Meaningful work experience or internships that have demonstrated or tested your professional skills are things that will make an employer stop and take notice.

It is sometimes more comfortable for job-seekers to make this initial request in writing and plan to meet later to hash out the differences. You will need to be fairly direct and assertive at this point even though you may feel extremely vulnerable. Keep in mind that the employer has chosen you from a pool of qualified applicants, so you are not as powerless as you think.

Sometimes the employer will bristle at the suggestion that there is room to negotiate. Stand firm, but encourage the employer to think about it for a day or two at which time you will discuss the details of your proposal with him/her. Do not rush the process because you are uncomfortable. The employer may be counting on this discomfort and use it to derail the negotiations. Remember, this is a series of volleys and lobs, trade-offs and compromises that occur over a period of time. It is a process—not a singular event!

Once you have reached a conclusion with which you are both relatively comfortable, present in writing your interpretation of the agreement so that if there is any question, it will be addressed immediately. Negotiation, by definition, implies that each side will give. Do not perceive it as an ultimatum.

If the employer chooses not to grant any of your requests—and realistically, he or she can do that—you will still have the option of accepting the original offer provided you have maintained a positive, productive and friendly atmosphere during your exchanges. You can always re-enter negotiations after you have demonstrated your worth to the organization.

Money Isn't Everything

There are many things you can negotiate besides salary. For example, benefits can add thousands of dollars to the compensation package. Benefits can range from paid personal leave to discounts on the company's products and services. They constitute more than just icing on the cake; they may be better than the cake itself. Traditional benefits packages include health insurance, paid vacation and personal/sick days. Companies may offer such benefits as child care, elder care or use of the company jet for family emergencies. Other lucrative benefits could include disability and life insurance and a variety of retirement plans. Some organizations offer investment and stock options as well as relocation reimbursement and tuition credits for continued education.

Written by Lily Maestas, Career Counselor, Career Services, University of California, Santa Barbara.

The Benefits of Company Benefits

THOUGH PROMISES OF high starting salaries or accelerated career growth may entice you as you search for your dream job, don't forget to check out the company's benefits package. These packages are generally designed to provide protection against financial hardship brought about by unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or injury. With the high cost of medical services, even a routine physical exam can set you back several hundred dollars if you don't have coverage. "Most employees today are looking for more than a paycheck," says Amy Roppe, former senior account manager at Benefit Source, Inc., a Des Moines, Iowa-based company that designs and administers employee benefit packages. "Employees are looking for overall job satisfaction, and benefits are a key part of that."

What kinds of benefits can you expect at your first job out of college? That depends. Not all benefits programs are created equal, and most have certain rules, limitations and exclusions, particularly in regard to health plans. Though some employers still provide complete coverage with no out-of-pocket expense to workers, most company plans now require the employee to pay part of the benefits expense, often in the form of payroll deductions. However, the cost is usually reasonable in comparison to footing the entire bill by yourself. The benefits described below will give you a general overview of what many companies offer to their employees:

- **Medical insurance.** This is the most basic (and probably most important) benefit you can receive. Health coverage limits an employee's financial liability in the event of illness or injury.
- **Disability insurance.** Provides an income to the employee in the event of a long-term disability.
- **Life insurance.** Provides a benefit payment to family members in the event of the employee's death.
- **Dental insurance.** Provides basic dental coverage. Though many people agree that dental insurance is overpriced (you'll seldom get more than your premiums back in the form of benefits), you'll be covered for cleanings, scalings and x-rays.
- **Prescription drug plan.** This can save you a bundle, particularly if you require medicine for an ongoing condition. Typically, the employee pays a fixed co-payment—for example, \$25—for each prescription.
- **Vision.** Provides a benefit that helps defray the cost of eye exams and corrective lenses.
- **Retirement plans.** These used to be funded entirely by employers but have been largely replaced by 401(k) plans,

which are funded by the employee, often with some degree of "matching" contribution from the employer. However, these matching contributions have limits and the plans vary from company to company. In many companies, there is a specified waiting period before new employees can participate.

- **Flexible spending accounts.** These plans allow you to set aside untaxed dollars to pay for dependent care and unreimbursed medical expenses.
- **Tuition reimbursement.** The employer reimburses the cost of continuing education as long as the classes pertain to your job and certain grade levels are achieved.
- **Vacation.** Most companies will offer paid vacation time to employees. The number of days off is usually determined by how long you've been with the company.
- **Sick time.** Paid leave in the event of illness.

You should also be aware that there is something called "soft benefits." These are usually very popular with employees and cost the company little or nothing. For example, many companies have gone to a business casual dress code, while others may offer what is called "dress-down Fridays." Flextime is another popular soft benefit that many employers offer. This simply means that you don't have to arrive at work at a specific time each day. If it's more convenient for you to start at 10 a.m. to avoid the morning rush hour, for example, you'll be able to do so. However, most companies require employees to be at the office during predetermined "core hours"—usually between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Telecommuting from home is another "benefit" that employers like to tout. However, don't assume you'll be allowed to work from home whenever you want. You'll usually be offered this option when you're too sick to make it to the office, when you're on a tight deadline and your boss wants you to put in extra time, or when you're unable to come to work because of weather-related conditions.

And just what are the most popular benefits among recent college grads entering the work force? "In today's environment, it is assumed that health insurance will be offered," says Amy Roppe, "so most young employees tend to inquire more about retirement or bonus programs. No one is sure whether or not there will be a Social Security benefit when retirement time comes. Workers are taking more personal responsibility for their own financial futures." That sounds like the kind of common-sense advice we should all take.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.

Backpack to Briefcase

Tips for a Successful Transition from College to the “Real” World

THE TRANSITION FROM college life to your professional career is one of the most difficult challenges you may face. This is a tough adjustment period, particularly if you have never spent any time working in an environment like the one in which you will be spending 40 or more hours a week.

You need to recognize that your first year on the job is a separate and unique career stage. You will be in a transition phase during this time. You're not a college student anymore, but you haven't earned all the rights and privileges of a professional either. The most important thing you will need to do is lose your college student attitudes and behaviors and begin to think and act like a professional.

You will quickly learn that the world of work is quite different from the college environment. When you show up for work on the first day, there will not be a syllabus waiting for you to explain what to do and how to do it. You have lost some of the freedom you enjoyed over your daily schedule as a college student. You will be viewed as “the new kid on the block,” and the quality of your work will become very important. Your performance will be a direct reflection on your boss or supervisor. If you can't get the job done right, someone else surely can.

Five Main Differences Between College and Work

1. In college you are used to frequent feedback, evaluation and direction. Ask for too much of this on the job and you will appear insecure and lacking in self-confidence.
2. As a student you have enjoyed frequent breaks and vacations from school usually totaling approximately 27 weeks spent in school. During your first year on the job you may have to work six months or more before you earn any time off. You will work on average more than 50 weeks that first year, maybe without a break at all.
3. In college you can choose your own performance level (A, B, C) by attending class, turning in assignments, and studying for exams. In your career, A-level work is required at all times.
4. College tends to focus on effort and growth. The real world cares only about results.
5. Students are encouraged to put forth an individual effort and think independently. Once you begin working, you will see that you will be required to work a lot with teams and in collaborating efforts.

Now that you have had a chance to see what some of the main differences are between college and work, you should take some time to consider how to make that transition as smooth as possible. Please take a look at some suggestions for your first year on the job.

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10 Steps to First-Year Success

1. Set goals that include gaining acceptance, respect and credibility. Learn to be a professional.
2. Take advantage of mentor and coaching relationships.
3. Own up to your mistakes and learn from them.
4. Admit what you don't know; sometimes that is more important than showing off what you do know.
5. Build a good track record. You may have to go above and beyond the call of duty during your first year to make a lasting positive impression.
6. Be prepared to pay your dues. You have to earn your “pin stripes” before you can shed them. Be prepared to work long, hard hours.
7. Find your “niche” with the organization. Work on building relationships and fitting into the company culture.
8. Absorb information and spend your first year learning as much as possible. Master the tasks of your job and improve your knowledge, skills and abilities. LEARN, LEARN, LEARN!
9. Have a positive attitude. You will make a better impression being positive and likable. Leave your complaining at college!
10. Recognize that office politics exist. Learn the politics of your office, but don't get involved. Watch out for complainers; they tend to gravitate to new hires in hopes of bringing you to their “side.”

Graduate School

Is Graduate School Right for You?

AT SOME POINT in your college career, you must decide what you would like to do after graduation—and that includes whether or not to attend graduate school. If you're trying to determine whether graduate school is right for you, here are some pointers to help you make an enlightened decision.

1. Should I consider going to graduate school?

Going to graduate school might be a good idea if you...

- want to be a professor, lawyer, doctor, investment banker or work in any profession that requires a post-secondary education.
- wish to develop additional expertise in a particular subject or field to maximize your future earning potential and opportunities for career advancement.
- are deeply interested in a particular subject and wish to study it in-depth—AND have the time and financial resources to devote to further education.

Going to graduate school might not be a good idea if you...

- are trying to delay your entry into the "real world" with real responsibilities and real bills.
- are clueless about your career goals.
- aren't prepared to devote the time and hard work needed to succeed.
- want to stay in school longer to avoid a poor job market.

2. Is it better to work first or attend graduate school immediately after I complete my undergraduate degree?

Work first if...

- you would like to get some real-world work experience before investing thousands of dollars in a graduate degree.
- the graduate school of your choice prefers work experience (most MBA and some Ph.D. programs require this).
- you cannot afford to go to graduate school now, and you haven't applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.

Go to graduate school now if...

- you are absolutely sure you want to be a college professor, doctor, lawyer, etc., and need a graduate degree to pursue your dream job.
- you have been awarded grants, fellowships, scholarships or assistantships that will help pay for your education.
- you're concerned that once you start earning real money, you won't be able to return to the lifestyle of a "poor" student.
- your study habits and mental abilities are at their peak, and you worry whether you'll have the discipline (or motivation) to write papers and study for exams in a few years.

3. I am broke. How will I pay for tuition, books, fees and living expenses?

- *Family:* You've likely borrowed from them in the past; maybe you're lucky enough for it to still be a viable option.
- *Student Loans:* Even if you've taken out loans in the past, another \$50,000 - \$75,000 may be a sound "investment" in your future.

- *Fellowships/Scholarships:* A free education is always the best option. The catch is you need a high GPA, good GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT scores and the commitment to search out every possible source of funding.
- *Teaching/Research Assistantships:* Many assistantships include tuition waivers plus a monthly stipend. It's a great way to get paid for earning an education.
- *Employer Sponsorship:* Did you know that some companies actually pay for you to continue your education? The catch is they usually expect you to continue working for them after you complete your degree so they can recoup their investment.

4. What are the pros and cons of going to graduate school full-time vs. part-time?

Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:

- you'll be able to complete your degree sooner.
- you can totally commit your intellectual, physical and emotional energy to your education.
- ideal if you want to make a dramatic career change.

Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:

- work income helps pay for your education.
- you can take a very manageable course load.
- you can juggle family responsibilities while completing your degree.
- allows you to work in the function/industry/career of your choice while continuing your education.
- employer will often pay for part (or all) of your graduate degree.

5. Assuming I want to go to graduate school in the near future, what should I do now?

- Identify your true strengths, interests and values to help you discover what is right for YOU—not your friends or parents.
- Keep your grades up and sign up (and prepare) to take the required standardized tests.
- Talk to faculty, friends and family who have gone to graduate school to get their perspective about the differences between being an undergraduate and a graduate student.
- Talk to faculty, friends and family who are in your targeted profession to get a realistic sense of the career path and the challenges associated with the work they do.
- Investigate creative ways to finance your education—by planning ahead you may reduce your debt.
- Research graduate schools to help you find a good match.
- Investigate the admissions process and the current student body profile of your targeted schools to evaluate your probability for admission.
- Have faith and APPLY! Remember, you can't get in unless you apply.

Written by Roslyn J. Bradford.

Graduate School: Checklist

Special Considerations for Application Deadlines

- Application deadlines vary! You may need to adjust this timeline to meet the deadlines of the programs you apply to, so be sure to note each program's application deadline. This timeline is based on a January 1 deadline.
- If you find more than one deadline for your program of interest, use the earliest deadline to set your timeline; this is most often the one you must meet to be considered for fellowships and other financial assistance.

Summer Before Senior Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify your goals and consider whether or not graduate school is right for you. <input type="checkbox"/> Write a draft of your personal statement. <input type="checkbox"/> Research program options and requirements by browsing through graduate program guides (online and hard copy), university websites, and other resources. <input type="checkbox"/> Research fellowships and other types of financial assistance. Consider government agencies, philanthropic organizations, the schools you apply to, and professional organizations or honor societies as potential sources of funding. <input type="checkbox"/> Register for required standardized tests.
August-September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meet with faculty members in your department to discuss your personal statement, possible programs to consider, and potential fellowships and other funding sources. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine the schools to which you will apply. <input type="checkbox"/> Get organized. Create a file for each school you will apply to and keep all related application information in the appropriate file. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for standardized tests.
September-October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take standardized tests and request that your scores be sent to the appropriate schools. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete your personal statement and have it reviewed at the Career Services Center. <input type="checkbox"/> Request letters of recommendation from faculty; provide a copy of your personal statement and resume/curriculum vitae to each professor. Give your recommenders the appropriate information to submit their letters. Many recommendation letters can be submitted online and your recommenders will receive an email with instructions when you list them on your online application. If your school requires hard copy letters, give your recommenders the appropriate address. <input type="checkbox"/> Order transcripts from all post-secondary institutions and request official copies be sent directly to the schools to which you are applying.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete application forms. (Do a draft first!) <input type="checkbox"/> Mail application materials (if not Web-based) one month in advance of the application deadline. Pay close attention to the instructions; all documents may not go to the same address. <input type="checkbox"/> Remind your recommenders of when they must submit your letters of recommendation (i.e., the application deadline of each program—consider telling them a deadline one to two weeks earlier than the actual deadline in case something falls through at the last minute). <input type="checkbox"/> Make copies of all application pieces for your records.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check with schools to verify that your letters of recommendation, test scores, transcripts, and other required documents have arrived to complete your application by the deadline. <input type="checkbox"/> Remember that many offices will be busy at the end of the semester and over winter break, so do not wait until the last minute.
February-March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule campus visits to locations in which you are interested. Some programs may have planned visitations for admitted students; inquire about this. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare questions for each school to gain more information about academic programs, student life, and professional development opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct informational interviews with students in the programs to which you have applied to gather their perspective.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mail acceptance forms and, if required, deposits. <input type="checkbox"/> Notify schools that you will not be attending after making your decision. <input type="checkbox"/> Send thank-you letters to the writers of your letters of recommendation. Be sure to let them know where you're going to school!

Adapted with permission from the 2014-2015 Purdue University Career Planning Handbook.

Guidelines for Writing Your Personal Statement

STEP 1: Brainstorming

Actions:

- Devote time to reflect on the following questions.
- Discuss them with friends or family members.
- Jot down notes. In some cases write sentences.
- Think about the flip side of each question. For example, why are you really committed to the field of biology despite pressure from your parents to become a lawyer or to get a job?

Your answers to some of these questions will form the heart of your personal statement.

1. How did your pre-college education influence your decision to pursue graduate study in your field?
Think about: High school courses, teachers, special programs, student organizations, and community or volunteer work.
2. How has your college experience influenced your decision?
Think about: College courses, professors, academic interests, research, special programs, student organizations, and the decision-making process you went through to choose your major.
3. How has your work experience influenced your decision?
Think about: Internships, externships, part-time jobs, summer jobs, and volunteer or community work.
4. Who has had the most influence on your decision to pursue graduate study? In what ways?
Think about: Parents, relatives, teachers, professors, clergy, friends of the family, college friends, parents of friends, local merchants, supervisors, coaches, doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc.
5. What situation has had the most influence on your decision?
Think about: Family, academic, work or athletic situations. Think about happy, sad, traumatic, moving, or memorable situations.
6. What personally motivates you to pursue graduate study in this field?
Think about: Your personal skills, interests, and values.

STEP 2: Writing Your Personal Statement

Actions:

Incorporate your responses to the above questions. Begin writing your first draft:

1. Develop an outline of your statement prior to writing. It doesn't have to be detailed. It can be three or four main points in the order you want to make them.
2. Accentuate your strengths and what makes you unique.
3. Explain your weaknesses in positive ways. For example, refer to them not as weaknesses but as areas for improvement or growth.
4. Paint pictures and tell stories about what makes you special. In this way the admissions readers will remember you. The story can be happy or sad. The more feeling you can inject into your statement, the more you will stand out.
5. Find out the specific orientation and philosophy of the graduate program. Adapt and refine your statement to fit. This will make you stand out from other applicants who recycle the same personal statement with each application.

Suggested Outline

Your personal statement will likely range from 250-1200 words or 1-6 pages. The typical personal statement should be 2-3 double-spaced pages or 500-700 words. Here is a suggested outline. You should adjust the main point of each paragraph and number of paragraphs depending on the desired length of your personal statement and the areas in your background that you choose to emphasize.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Paragraph 1 | A personal human-interest story |
| Paragraph 2 | Your academic interests and achievements |
| Paragraph 3 | Your relevant work and/or research experiences |
| Paragraph 4 | Your career interests |
| Paragraph 5 | Why you are interested in this particular school |
| Paragraph 6 | The qualities you will bring to this school |

References

Write for Success: Preparing a Successful Professional School Application, Third Edition, October 2005 by Evelyn W. Jackson, PhD and Harold R. Bardo, PhD. NAAHP, National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, Inc.

"Perfect Personal Statements" by Mark Alan Stewart. *Peterson's Guide 2004*

Personal Statement Critiques

Contact your campus career office and make an appointment with a career counselor to have your personal statement critiqued. Ask a professor if they would review it as well. Having feedback from professionals with different points of view can only make for a stronger personal statement overall.

Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.

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